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CHRISTIE'S FAITH.

VOL. III.



CHRISTIE'S FAITH.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“HIGH CHURCH,” “NO CHURCH,”
“OWEN: A WAIF,” “MATTIE: A STRAY,”
“CARRY'S CONFESSION,”
&c. &c.

“Look to the Poor.”
COWPER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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OF
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CHAPTER I.

THE JUNIOR PARTNER.

THE business of Henwood and Henwood, wharf-
ingers, warehousemen, and general consignees
—general anything that would bring money into
the business—throve apace. With new blood
in the firm, it took a new lease of life, and peo-
ple City way said that the Henwoods were coining
money.

The new partner, Zachary Henwood, formerly
sub-manager, worked more arduously than ever at
the business. He had obtained the summit of his
desires, marrying Mrs. Henwood's daughter, and
becoming partner in the firm, but he worked not
the less hard; he was possessed with the craving
to become rich, and it beset him at every turn
of his career, and allowed him little rest. He
was mounting the ladder now, and he would not
balk his ascent by lingering on the way. He was
ambitious, and he *would* rise; he knew that he
was shrewd and clever, and that everything before
him was handy to his will, and must bring rare
per-centages. Mrs. Henwood had no cause to

complain of the want of industry in her partner ; he was a credit to the firm ; he kept up the old name of Henwood, every member of that illustrious family having done considerable homage to Mammon in his day.

Whether Zach was happy in his high estate we may consider presently ; industry is a sign of happiness, a wise-acre has observed, and the young partner was industry itself. The long nights at the office, after office hours, were his still ; he was indefatigable in his efforts ; there were times when men might prophesy that his greed of gain would kill him.

But he worked on ; he made good bargains and drove hard ones—he spared no man in his way, and he strove and struggled for his cash as men who have known privation early in life will strive sometimes. From those who had shared privations with him he held himself aloof ; he wanted no obstacles in his way to independence.

He was no hero, that the reader can see for himself. His natural virtues—he was set up in life with but a sparse proportion of them—did not expand or flower forth in the sun of his prosperity, but shrivelled and contracted with the heat. He was a man at his worst, when the prize was in his grasp—good fortune spoiled Zach Fernwell utterly.

He became vain of his position in the world, the wealth at his command, and the name he bore in

the City—to society, that society upon which he believed he had a right to thrust himself, he was urbane and pleasant, but he looked down upon the life whence he had arisen, and in his mercantile career he was hard, pushing, ravenous. Old servants at the warehouse, old as Charles Wynn almost, drew comparisons between Zach and the Henwoods who had reigned before him. He was like the rest of them; he was wondrously like his predecessors, they said, a restless money grubber, with no soul above the bales and casks that went in and out all day.

Zach was at work in Tooley Street as usual—in his office where a hundred letters were written a day, and a hundred people called to see the manager—when a messenger brought in a card, at which Zach stared and bit his lip. Zach's face had become a face hard to guess at; pale, cold, and expressionless, scarcely moving a muscle, and never on any pretence brightening up with a smile, and the signs of vexation at this moment were things to surprise the subordinate.

“Show him in—and tell every one else that I am out, and shall not return for an hour.”

“Yes, sir.”

The messenger retired, and Zach set down his pen, and took in an extra button across his narrow chest, as though preparing for a contest. He became very hard and repellent in that instant, his

looks presaging no good to him who was advancing.

“He has brought it on himself by coming here,” he muttered; “the time has changed, and it is my turn.”

The door opened, and Mr. Richard Fernwell was admitted. He was tolerably well dressed, wearing a smart frock coat with watered silk lapels, and a red rose in his button-hole. He flourished a white hat in one hand, and a walking cane in the other. Zach’s annual stipend had evidently done wonders for him, or been the foundation for wonders. Twelve months since father and son had met in the Yarmouth rows; six months since Zachary Henwood’s marriage.

“I have the pleasure to salute you,” said Mr. Fernwell with a low bow as he advanced. “I am behindhand with my congratulations at your rise in life, but they are none the less hearty for being offered late in the day.”

“What do you want here?” was the abrupt inquiry.

“*Ma foi!* haven’t I told you?”

“You have broken faith with me by coming to the office. I said that I would not have it!”

Zachary spoke through his set teeth, and looked defiance across his desk at the intruder.

“Oh! to the devil with your braggadocio!” exclaimed Mr. Fernwell, losing his suave manners on the instant, “that will not go down with me—

your father, sir. Don't you know enough of me to feel assured that this kind of thing is a very grave mistake?"

"On your side—yes," said Zach.

"I offend you," said Fernwell, dropping into a chair, and then bringing it by degrees to the other side of the low desk at which his son was seated ; "I am a *bête noire*—the villain of a melo-drama, turning up at unseasonable periods to cast a shade on your rejoicing—the convict father of whom you would be quit. So be it, friend—the Fates have determined that there shall be a cloud to every life—make the best of yours."

"I will."

"Make the best of me," added Fernwell ; "I am not a man to render myself unpleasant—if convenient to you to keep me in the background, it is a mere question of that money which is now no question with you."

"Ay, but it is."

"You can't plead bills to take up, pressure of the markets, rise in the rate of discount to me—keep those poor excuses for your customers."

Zachary took up the pen again, and began to write.

"You will excuse me, but my time is valuable. Have you anything more to say ?"

"Damn it, I should think I had !" cried Fernwell ; "I want money."

" You have had your quarter's salary."

" I will have no wretched salary doled out to me—I told you that I would rise as you rose, and, by heaven, I shan't break my word!"

Zach commenced a letter.

" I have been speculating, Zach," said his father ; " betting a little on the favourite—winning in one case, unfortunately in another coming suddenly to grief. The fate of betting-men in the aggregate, I fear—a sad moral, but reminding me also of a sad necessity. Are you listening, you dog ?"

Mr. Fernwell shouted forth his last inquiry, bringing his clenched fist down upon the desk. The coolness and indifference of his son were too much for his own powers of self-command—he had been always a bully, and had never studied the art of repression.

Zach leaned back in his chair, pen in hand still, and looked steadily into his father's face. Mr. Fernwell felt uncomfortable ; for the son was perfectly at his ease, and seemed to fear him no more. He was not the nervous, craven lad whom he had known hitherto.

" Mr. Fernwell," said Zach, " I am sorry to be a witness to this ebullition of temper—it lowers you and distresses me. I would ask you to call again, if I ever intended to let you into the premises."

" To let me in !"

“You want more money—I have no more money to give away. You grumble at the lowness of your salary—another word, and I withdraw it altogether.”

“What!—what!” gasped the father, “you defy me, then?”

“I can afford to defy you. Yes.”

“By all the torments,” began Fernwell, “I will blast your name in the city—your position—your chance with Mrs. Henwood—I will tell all—all!”

“Enough,” said Zach, flinging down his pen. “I warned you, and you took no warning. I lavish no more money away—I will not give you another sixpence. Leave the place, and do your worst.”

“I will go at once to Mrs. Henwood.”

“I have already warned her of you—she would as soon see you as a wild beast, and as soon believe in you as in the devil.”

“She shall believe me.”

“She may even do so, if it be possible for the fervour of your narrative to take effect. Mrs. Henwood is my partner, and in *my* power now!”

Mr. Fernwell thrust his hands into his pockets, and muttered innumerable oaths. He saw at once the weakness of his position, and the strength of his son’s. The rich woman’s daughter was his son’s wife now, and the son the ruling agent of the firm. He himself was powerless to act; his facts were hard to be believed at any time—and credit

“Ah! my father, damn him!” answered the unfilial Zach—“well, I will be quit of him for good—I will give him two hundred pounds *now* to help him on to his last chance, if he will never let me see or hear of him again.”

“I'll take it.”

“We will make it out as a debt—an I O U affair,” said Zach coolly, “so that if you appear I shall arrest you, and put you in a debtor's prison by way of a change, whilst debtors' prisons last. I am sorry to say that they are nearly out of fashion.”

Zach proceeded to business at once; he dashed off the I O U; he dashed off the cheque for the amount that he had mentioned; as an afterthought he dashed off for his father's signature a form of recantation for slanders of various kinds, and which were acknowledged as wholly base and groundless; then he put the pen into Mr. Fernwell's hands.

Mr. Fernwell would have signed anything at that moment to get the money promised him—the Fiend in the German legend would have driven an easy bargain for signatures with Mr. Fernwell at that juncture: he would have signed all day any documents in the world, and any name that was required for that matter, for the sum which Zach passed over to him.

Outside the wharf, and making for Zach's

bankers, keeping his left hand in his trousers pocket, and his cheque clutched in his left hand, he looked every inch the worthless wretch that he was.

“ If it ever comes my turn again,” said Richard Fernwell, “ I will remember this day. I’ll drag him down—or kill him !”

CHAPTER II.

HALF MAD.

TO turn to Martin Wynn's house, and to note the progress or the changes therein, is not to distress the reader with a long description. We have seen that Martin Wynn's life was a quiet one—troubled by little that was extraordinary, and kept free from those great misfortunes which make their mark in novels. Martin's was a quiet life; had it not been for Teddy crossing his career, and puzzling him in the latter days—were it not for a few stormy elements to come—we might add, an uneventful life.

Peaceable men, taking life peaceably, and doing their duty in it by helping others to peace with that strength and energy which develop themselves in “the crisis,” are still to be found here and there.

Martin had his little troubles, of course; latterly there was Teddy to perplex him, and his daughter to watch. Neither man nor maiden could he thoroughly make out.

Teddy, in the first place, he saw but sel-

dom! Teddy held aloof from Griffin Street ; his shadow had not once fallen on the house since that confession which he had made to Martin. They met at Stanley and Burns' now and then ; but Teddy was shy of his late master—ever between them, despite all Martin's efforts to break it down, was “a distance” that kept them at arm's length. Teddy seemed convinced in his mind that he had lost *caste* in Martin's estimation ; he had fallen in love with his master's daughter, and after that what could the master, kind and gentle as he might be, think of him ? Teddy thought that he was pitied, perhaps, but he did not require pity ; he knew what Martin thought of Zach, and he felt that though his own story had ended in a different fashion, the good opinion that he had striven hard to earn was forfeited. It did not matter that Martin appeared the same to him ; asked him why he did not come to Griffin Street, even mentioned Christie's name, and told him that he was sure that Christie would be glad to see him—all this very kind, and like Martin Wynn, but no generosity, no forgiveness even, could move Teddy a hair's breadth from the path he had chosen for himself. He was still as grateful, still as devoted to the Wynn cause ; had trouble come to Martin he would have given up every chance in life to alleviate it ; but he stood firm in his new resolution ; and it was his deep humility rather

than any sense of wounded pride that kept him terribly firm.

Once or twice Martin faced him with Christie herself ; taking her to Upper Ground Street in the summer evenings that had come now. Teddy was always found at home, reading to the old watchman and Polly, or relating an incident of the day with a quaintness of description characteristic of Teddy at his best, but Christie's coming was to quench him utterly. He would be confused and silent at first, answering but in uncertain monosyllables ; and after a while there followed an excuse to fetch something for Polly, to go to the wharf with old Mr. Wynn, to do some work in his own room, which was imperative, and which would keep him there till Martin and Christie called good night to him before they went away.

And Christie ? Well, Christie was a perplexity also to Martin Wynn. She was more thoughtful than she used to be, he fancied—could he have seen her when he was at work himself in that front parlour, or when he was away from home, he would have "*fancied*" no longer ; but she maintained that she was happy enough, and even to talk of Teddy and his eccentricities was not to embarrass her in any way. She had given up Mr. Ubbs for good, he knew ; there had ensued between the ill-fated suitor and Christie a long explanation of their

unsuitability for each other, of the daughter's objection to be married, and her desire to remain for ever and ever with her father; and though Mr. Ubbs believed that it would all come right in time, he called no more at Griffin Street. Still Christie *was* a perplexity to her father; Martin was not quite certain that she did not miss Teddy too much, or did not brood too deeply in his absence concerning the motives that kept Teddy away—and though he knew that her pride, or self-dependence, or "faith," or whatever it might be called, would keep her very strong, still he was sorry to think that at an age when she should be most bright, there was a something between her and the sun.

Martin was thinking of Christie and Teddy after his old fashion, over his work—wondering what would have happened had Teddy held fast to the old place, and whether it were for the best, or the worst, that he had gone—whether Christie was not too good for Teddy, and Teddy was not right and to be commended for his studious isolation, when two chestnut horses and a yellow-bodied carriage, that he recognized, stopped before his parlour windows.

"Why, here's that woman again!" he ejaculated, with something like dismay. "She's like ill-luck coming to the house. Have I ever met her in my life without meeting trouble with her, and being bothered for six months after meeting? It's very

hard that she can't keep her grievances to herself. I'm not the family adviser!"

By this time the footman had delivered a note at the door, and was waiting, said Mr. Wynn's maid, for an answer.

"Oh! it's not the lady herself, at any rate," he muttered, as he broke the seal. "It's only a message."

Opening the letter, he read as follows:—

"Wimbledon, July, 186—.

"DEAR MR. WYNN,

"In altering and removing the furniture for my last ball, your cabinet, I regret to say, has become injured. Will you kindly see at once if it be necessary to have the cabinet at your house, or whether a day's work at mine will not be sufficient? My carriage is at your service.

"Yours truly,

"CAROLINE HENWOOD."

Mr. Wynn folded the note, and sighed.

"I knew that I couldn't escape her long," he said. "I wonder what the clumsy rascals have done to the cabinet?"

He went to the street door, whereat the footman was lounging—the successor to the young man who had objected to waiting about in the cold.

"Will you tell Mrs. Henwood that I'll come

down in the course of the afternoon," said Martin.

The footman, who was regarding the upper floors of the houses in Griffin Street in a supercilious manner, and continued thus to regard them whilst addressing Martin, said—

" You're to come back with us, I understood. You'd better get in, for *she* don't like waiting for anybody, I can tell you."

" I'm not going in that thing," said Martin. " I'll come down by train this afternoon."

" Oh! very well," said the footman, languidly removing himself from the doorway, " it don't matter to me, of course."

The carriage and horses, with attendant lacqueys, whirled themselves away from Griffin Street, and it was not till a later hour that Martin Wynn left home for Wimbledon, reaching Mrs. Henwood's villa in due course.

" The last time I came here with Teddy, and Teddy met his brother Zach, and his first great disappointment together," murmured Martin, as he went along the drive, " somehow we lost a little sunshine here, and never got it back."

He was in the drawing-room a few minutes afterwards, bowing to the great lady from whom it seemed that he should not be able to entirely free himself again. Mrs. Henwood rose and shook hands with him, as with an old friend; and Martin was, at all events, pleased with his reception—still

more pleased not to detect any affectation of demeanour—"airs and graces," he termed it—in her greeting to him.

Martin was even startled at Mrs. Henwood's appearance. Not yet five-and-forty years of age—she was his own age within a day or two, he knew—it was remarkable to witness how rapidly she had aged, despite her constant war against that Time which dealt with her so mercilessly. She clung still to her pearl powder, rouge, and ringlets—for she was a woman who cared not to look ten years older than she really was—but they became her less with every day, and looked more out of place upon her. She could not arrest the deepening of the lines upon her cheeks and forehead, or do much to stop the darkening of that shade beneath her eyes ; she had tried very hard to keep her cares away—she had been recommended by her doctor never to distress herself or her nerves, if she could help it ; but of late years the troubles would come uppermost, and it became more difficult to shake them off. The artificial juvenility of bloom that day did not prevent Martin Wynn from seeing that it was the face of a miserable woman—a miserable old woman, he might have added. She was too "low" even to put on her company smile on that occasion, but looked very gravely at the man whom she had summoned to her house.

"You haven't been ill?" was Martin's sudden exclamation.

"Ill!—do I look ill, then, Mr. Wynn?" was her quick response to this.

For a reason better known to herself than Martin, she had tried to look her best that day, laying on her powder with an unusual degree of thickness, and manipulating with her hare's foot and rouge, and being manipulated upon by her maid, until her maid was "fit to drop," as she told her friends and equals at a later hour.

"You're looking *tired*, at all events," corrected Martin—"been up the last five nights, perhaps—I believe you're in the season."

"I hate the season!" said Mrs. Henwood, peevishly—"I have had enough of seasons lately; they're all alike—the same frivolity, slander, heartlessness, and pride meeting you at every turn. Very likely I look tired enough."

"*You* tired of pleasure, Mrs. Henwood?" said Martin, with no small surprise—"that is odd news."

"We all get odd as we grow old, I think sometimes," replied Mrs. Henwood; "and see what an old woman I am now, Mr. Wynn!"

She laughed, and shook her ringlets with something of that past affectation, which Martin Wynn had missed, and then she paused for Martin's protest against her self-depreciation.

But she should have known Martin Wynn by this time.

"Oh! we are all getting on," said Martin; "I suppose we have no right to complain. On the contrary, if we grow better with our years, to rejoice."

"Have you grown better?" was the sharp answer.

"I think that I am less proud," said Martin.

"You!—why, you have impressed everybody so much with *your* humility!"

"Yes. That was my pride—something like Uriah Heeps's, madam."

"I never met him."

"Uriah is in one of Charles Dickens' works."

"I never read," responded Mrs. Henwood—"I haven't much time—I don't care for reading. So you have grown less proud—if I congratulate you, will you do me the same kind office? I am fond of compliments," she added, truthfully enough.

"You are less proud, then?"

"Yes. I have had a great deal to humiliate me," she said, with no small sadness in her tones; "and possibly some remnants of your Yarmouth sermons clung to me after you had gone. Twelve months ago—why, they seem twelve years."

"Not to me," was the sturdy answer.

"Ah! you have not experienced trouble, or succumbed to temptation."

“What?” exclaimed Martin.

“I have had to face trouble, and I always gave way to temptation when it was a temptation to my taste,” she said, scoffingly.

“I do not exactly know whether you are in jest or earnest.”

“That is the charm of my style, Mr. Wynn.”

“Oh! is it?”

“See to your work, please. How much damage have my clumsy servants done to your *chef d'œuvre*?”

Martin went to the cabinet, and inspected it. He sighed at the little care that had been taken of his work—at the only piece of work in Europe of its kind. The servants had bumped and knocked it about at divers periods, winding up by bringing the corner of a grand piano with a crash into the face of the principal goddess.

“It has been considerably damaged,” said Martin; “you must have some handy young creatures about your house!”

“Creatures who never study me or my furniture,” said Mrs. Henwood.

“Not the latter, at all events.”

“How long will it take to restore, Mr. Wynn?”

“It depends upon my good fortune in dropping on woods of the right colour and shade. I will take this panel home.”

“Cannot it be done here, then?”

“Oh! no—impossible.”

“I thought that you could bring your woods, and restore it as it stands.”

Martin shook his head, and repeated that that plan of action was impossible.

“Very well. Take away the panel, then.”

Martin had a tool or two with him in his coat pocket, and proceeded to unscrew the hinges of the lower panel, Mrs. Henwood watching him from the ottoman on which she had dropped. She had something more to say, it was evident; there were many questions hovering on her lip that she had intended to put to Martin Wynn in the spare moments over the task with which she had furnished him—having but a faint idea of marqueterie work, and thinking that it was all very easy, putting little pieces of wood together, and polishing them up afterwards.

“Mr. Wynn,” she said at last, “I did not take your advice, of which I came in search in the winter-time. It was not to the purpose, I thought, and could not result in any good.”

“You were the better judge of that, doubtless,” said Martin, politely; “they married, and you made Zachary a partner—it was generous on your part, and, doubtless, Mr. Zach appreciates that generosity.”

“I don't know—he is a good partner, at all events.”

“And a good husband, I hope?”

“Lettice says so—it would be early days to assert the contrary,” she answered; “of husband and wife, I do not see a great deal—I am very much alone in this great house now.”

“You fill it with your friends very often, Mrs. Henwood.”

“I fill it with my acquaintances,” she corrected; “friendship is out of fashion—I never met with it—I don’t believe in it.”

“I would try another way to find my friends, then,” said Martin.

“Ah! go to chapel, I suppose, and persuade a new army of hypocrites what an upright, virtuous, amiable woman I am,” she cried; “no, that will not do for me.”

Martin had one door of his cabinet in his hands now. It was a small door, that he tucked under his arm like a portfolio, as he looked hard at Mrs. Henwood.

“You don’t want me to begin an old argument, I suppose?” asked Martin; “I can’t convince you—you’re so very stubborn, that you put me out of temper.”

Mrs. Henwood laughed at this. It was the first effort at hilarity that Martin had witnessed in her that day, and it seemed a dreary and forced effort with that new and melancholy face before him.

“I like your advice better than your arguments,”

she said ; "though I do not pay any attention to either. Your advice is kind and well-meant—and I have not forgotten what you said in Griffin Street."

"I am afraid that I have," answered Martin.

"When I want advice in a great strait, I will come to you again, if you will allow me," she said ; "for there really are sense and thought in you, and I can't find those requisites in *my* set. I am heartily sick of my set!" was the peevish exclamation here.

"I'm glad to hear it," cried Martin ; "it must pall on you."

"What do you know of my class?"

"Oh! very little," Martin confessed.

He had seen in his mind's eye whole regiments of Mrs. Henwood's "set," all overflowing with envy, uncharitableness, worldliness, and self-conceit—all bent on pleasure in every way, and at every corner of life's journey—living and dying for pleasure, and bowing to the Idol Fashion, as the worshippers of old bowed to Baal—fine people, living by the square and rule—all mechanism, but no soul. He did not like to express this, for, after all, he fancied that it was unjust to take Mrs. Henwood as a sample of the whole.

"Are you going now?"

"Yes, madam."

"When do you think that that panel will be

finished?" she asked, a second time; "in weeks or months, now?"

"A fortnight, perhaps."

"Write and let me know when I may expect it home. Bring it home yourself, mind—I may have news for you."

"News for me?" said Martin; "good news, I hope."

"You may be the better judge of that, than I."

Martin was ready to depart. She went with him into the hall, waving imperiously away the menial lingering there; before Martin could stop her, she had even opened the door for him, in an absent manner, that surprised herself the instant afterwards.

"You perceive what a deal of pride I have lost," she said, with a faint smile; "or how eccentric I am becoming. Good day."

"Good day," said Martin.

"One moment," she said quickly; "I thought that I had something more to say. His brother—how is he getting on?"

"Brother?—Zach's brother, you mean?"

Mrs. Henwood nodded.

"Very well, no doubt. He is steady, clever, and persevering—he has no expensive tastes, and he keeps good hours, I believe."

"He has left you, then?"

"Yes."

"You found him out?" she said eagerly; "he deceived you and proved himself a schemer—just as I prophesied. He is a man whom nobody can trust—say that, please?"

"Why, I have just said the contrary," replied Martin, very much surprised.

"You don't know how glad I would be to hear that he was not deserving of any support—any one's confidence—that, in fact, he was more like his father than my partner. That—"

"Stop, please, Mrs. Henwood," cried Martin; "this is an awful expression of ill-will against one who has never done you any harm. Why, you haven't improved in the least, after all!"

"I don't like the Fernwells, you know that," she replied; "and if that son were deserving of misfortune like his father, it would be so much better for me, perhaps—I think it would—but then I am a fool of a woman! Half-mad at times, and not conscious of what I am talking about. Good day, again."

"Decidedly half-mad," thought Martin, as he went homewards; "for what good to her could ensue from Teddy's downfall? Yes, half-mad, poor woman!—I knew that long ago, and to think that she has only just found it out herself!"

CHAPTER III.

MAD ALTOGETHER.

AFTER due notice given as required, Martin Wynn took home the renovated panel of his cabinet. The woman who was half mad did not receive him in the drawing-room, as on the previous occasion; on the contrary, an apology for Mrs. Henwood's non-appearance was tendered to him by the servant.

"Mrs. Henwood's daughter has called, sir, and Mrs. Henwood will see you when she has gone."

"I don't know that it is of any consequence," said Martin.

"You're to wait, please," added the servant. "Mrs. Henwood has left orders that you are not to leave until she has seen you."

"Very kind of Mrs. Henwood to give her orders," said Martin drily; "I'll think them over, young man."

Martin went to his cabinet and commenced the little work that there was before him. He was still at the cabinet when a young lady in a stiff silk rustled into the room, and pronounced his name.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Wynn," she said. "I thought that it was scarcely fair, for old acquaintance sake, to leave the house without asking after your daughter's health."

She spoke hurriedly, making no approach to friendliness by offering him her hand; she spoke even abruptly in her haste, as Martin rose from his knees to address her.

"My daughter is very well, thank you, Mrs. Fernwell," said Martin.

"Mrs. Henwood is my name. My husband changed his, at my mother's request, long ago. I don't like the name of Fernwell."

"I question whether anybody has a right to change his name," said Martin; "I can't see what harm a name can do a person. It's childish rather."

"We have no cause to cling gratefully to the name of Fernwell," she said; "we Henwoods were glad to get rid of it altogether. My husband's brother has not changed his name, I presume?"

Again this sudden interest in Teddy—Martin could not understand it. The mother during her last visit—and now the daughter.

"No—he is doing his best to make the name a good one," answered Martin, "and I'm pleased to see there is no longer an interdict upon it in this house. I think that *he* will be pleased."

“He is getting on in the world, then?”

“Slowly—but surely, Mrs. Henwood.”

Lettice looked down at the carpet, and fidgeted with her parasol; Martin had time to survey her before she spoke again. She had not improved in her looks since her marriage; it seemed more than a year since their last meeting. There was a heaviness of brow that Martin did not remember to have noticed before—and yet the forehead could not have jutted forward like a landslip, and cast the large eyes more completely into shadow!

Still, the face was more heavy, he thought—as it was certainly more pale, and about the chin and jaw more angular. Possibly, thought Martin, she had been keeping late hours, like her mother—seeing the old season out, like the new year, before she left for the sea-side again. It must be hard work to keep up with the season, or people would never look so miserable towards its termination, was Martin’s final thought before he took his eyes from their one object of interest.

“Is he anything like his brother?” she asked suddenly.

“Teddy?—oh! no—Teddy is tall, and not so good-looking, although it’s a better face, so far as its expression goes—at least, in my opinion,” he corrected, out of regard for the feelings of his listener.

"I did not mean in looks," she said, "but in manners, disposition, character. You know them both?"

"Very little of your husband—a great deal of your brother-in-law."

"Don't call him that, please," was the quick reply; "he is not a brother-in-law of mine—I wouldn't see him for the world!"

"May I ask why this interest in him, then?" said Martin.

"I am not interested, that I am aware."

"Sometimes I wish that you and your husband were," said Martin; "now there is no secret to keep, I cannot understand the rich brother holding aloof from the poor one. Has Zachary spoken of him lately?"

"No."

"Why, then—oh! perhaps Mrs. Henwood has?"

"My mother!" exclaimed Lettice; "she is not very likely to mention his name."

"Whose name?" asked Mrs. Henwood, entering at this moment.

"Mr. Richard Fernwell's eldest son's," said Lettice, facing her mother as she replied.

Mrs. Henwood shrank a little; and then, after an acknowledgment of Martin Wynn's presence by a bow, she said quickly—

"I never speak, or think of him. What is he to me?"

“Pardon me,” said Martin, “but the last time that I was here you mentioned his name.”

“Casually, perhaps. I forget.”

“Oh ! I doubt that,” was Martin’s blunt assertion ; “you have a good memory, Mrs. Henwood, and it is not likely to betray you so readily. And really, I don’t see that there is anything to be ashamed of, or to be afraid of in him, that should make you backward in acknowledging an interest in the most unselfish fellow whom I have ever met.”

Mother and daughter did not answer at once, and there ensued a pause of considerable length. The daughter was the first to speak, with some of that past excitability to which Martin had been a witness at the Yarmouth railway station.

“ You speak up for your friend—we know nothing of him, and therefore say nothing against him. I, for one, will not shun him when we meet, if he be all that you describe. But—but I thought that he was like his father!”

“ No,” said Martin.

“ And your daughter Christie ?” she said, dashing towards another topic ; “ well, you say ? Not married yet ?”

“ Oh, no !”

“ Engaged ?”

“ No—not engaged.”

“ A pretty face like hers should have won many

suitors to her side, by this time. I am writing a book now, with a Christie for my heroine. Mr. Wynn, will you tell her that?"

Mr. Wynn promised to break that startling piece of information to her.

"My husband being a great deal from home, I cannot weary him by resuming an old habit," said Lettice; "in a false world—a world of one's own creation—it is more easy to forget the troubles of the real one."

"No troubles have fallen to your share, surely?" said the mother bitterly—"you who married for love, too?"

"Well, the man I married brings no trouble to me," answered Lettice; "so Mr. Wynn will not take that impression home with him. Will he take home a message to his daughter instead?"

"Certainly," said Martin.

"Tell Christie that I shall surprise her shortly with a visit. I owe her a scolding for not stopping at Yarmouth when I wanted her. I will swoop down upon her like a hawk yet, Mr. Wynn, and carry this pet lamb of yours away."

"I hope not."

"Beware of me—I am almost as eccentric as my mother."

She went away after this, and Mrs. Henwood followed her. Presently the outer door closed, and Mrs. Henwood re-entered.

“Quite as eccentric—don’t you think so, Mr. Wynn?” she asked.

“Upon my honour,” said Martin frankly, “you put the oddest questions to me.”

“What do you think of her now?—you have seen her before,” she said.

“She’s like a girl with something on her mind,” said Martin; “perhaps it’s the story she’s writing, though.”

“You wouldn’t say—judging by her looks—that she was happy now?”

“Well, judging by her looks—no.”

“Yet, there is a young woman who has had her own way in everything—to whom we have all yielded our prejudices, and succumbed—who has had every wish of her life gratified.”

“A lucky woman—I hope that she is grateful, if not happy.”

“Sometimes I fancy that she is a better daughter to me now, deficient as she may be in respect; for there is no more gratitude in her disposition, than there is any real happiness in her life. A poor woman doomed, I verily believe, to be always discontented.”

“It is very strange!”

“It is very natural,” said Mrs. Henwood—“natural now, with the selfish husband of whom I warned her. Perhaps it was natural before—long ago—for I can scarcely consider that her mother

has been a contented woman. A woman mild and gentle enough, and easily imposed upon, God knows—but not exactly contented."

Martin imagined not, but he turned towards the cabinet to repress a smile. He would not be led into any further discussion ; he was anxious to complete his work and be gone. There was a pressure of work at Griffin Street, and here at Wimbledon was everything to distract him, and set him thinking about other people's affairs.

"How long will you be fitting that panel in ?" she asked.

"A very little while now," said Martin.

"What am I to pay you for it ?—I will write you a cheque whilst you are working."

She crossed to a fancy writing-table, and took a seat before it. Martin left off his work to place a small bill before her. This was more like business and despatch, he thought. He should reach home earlier than he anticipated.

"Too small a sum, Mr. Wynn," said Mrs. Henwood ; "you are very modest in your charges."

"I have charged you at the highest rate, Mrs. Henwood."

"I am in a generous mood to-day—I shall double it."

"I do not require more than my full price," said Martin ; "and I cannot think of taking it."

"Why, I thought that you had become less

proud—you told me so,” said Mrs. Henwood, looking over her shoulder at him.

“Not so humble as all that,” replied Martin.

“I am in a liberal mood—don’t balk it.”

“More than half mad,” thought Martin ; but he answered—

“Well, madam, if you wish to get rid of your money, you may favour me by making out two cheques, each for the amount mentioned in that bill.”

“One for you, and one for some nasty refuge or other, I suppose ?”

“No—one for Martin, and one for Charles Wynn.”

“Charles Wynn ! Why, whoever is he ?”

“Ah ! yes, you have a bad memory,” said Martin ; “I apologize.”

“Charles Wynn is your father,” she said. “See, my memory is good enough. But—he—he is not at my wharf now ?”

“Yes, Madam, serving you his hardest, and with all his heart and strength—firmly believing that you are grateful for his service. Now, that old gentleman, who would not take a penny from me to keep him from the workhouse, would be very much delighted, very much flattered by some little appreciation of his long fealty to your house.”

“Do you think so ?” she said. “And it would please you ?”

"Yes. But it would have pleased me more, if you had not forgotten him."

"I will make reparation," she said. "The Henwoods are not as faithful as the Wynnns. I wish they were—I wish they had been!"

She sighed over her cheque-book. Martin went on with his panel fitting, wondering whenever he should see Mrs. Henwood in the same mood twice, and what she had done with all her old vanity, which was wearing out, perhaps, with her riper years. Certainly she had improved, or else she was going mad by degrees. Still a pleasant method with her madness—he could put up with this last phase of it.

"I will send the cheque to your father—with a letter."

"Thank you. Don't mention my name, on any account, or the cheque will come back, poor as he is!"

"I think that I can do things gracefully, if I try," said Mrs. Henwood, with a little of the vanity peeping out from under the cloak of her new amiability.

"A few men can—and all women!" answered Martin.

"Courteously spoken, Mr. Wynn," said Mrs. Henwood. "Now, make haste over that cabinet, for I have a deal to say to you."

He should not get home soon, after all! What a woman this was, to be sure!

"I have not any news for you—that is, I am afraid not," she corrected. "I'll think presently. But I want your advice again."

"My advice?" said Martin.

"I said last winter that I could not depend upon myself—or you saw that I could not, at all events—and I confessed that I had no one in whom I could trust but you. Ever a riddle to me it has been why I am drawn towards a man like you—but the solution dawns upon me at last. You are the only honest, unselfish man that I have ever known."

"Not unselfish, madam—quite the contrary. Honest, I believe."

"If you had taken my cheque for double the money, I should not have asked your advice, but have let you go away. I have been trying you, Martin Wynn."

"You suspected my honesty, then?"

"No—but still I thought that I would test you. Are you offended?"

"No. It does not matter," said Martin.

"Tell me when you have finished there."

"Well, I never shall finish whilst you are here, I'm afraid," Martin replied; "there's no getting on. You bewilder me with so many questions and surprises."

"I will come back in half an hour."

"Ten minutes will do."

"In ten minutes, then."

At the expiration of that period, Martin had completed his work on the cabinet, and was awaiting Mrs. Henwood's return. She was behind time somewhat, and Martin, who valued time, was becoming restless, when she condescended, at last, to enter an appearance.

Martin noticed that as she advanced she was looking paler beneath her false colours, and there certainly was a want of firmness in her step.

She went to her desk and took up the cheque that she had written out some minutes since.

"Put that away," she said, "and then we can talk."

Martin complied with her request, and then went to the desk himself, signed and stamped his bill in a business-like manner, and much to Mrs. Henwood's annoyance.

"When you *have* finished," she reminded him, with a tinge of her past acerbity.

"I am ready now."

She sat down on the couch before the empty steel fire-place, and motioned Martin Wynn to a seat beside her. Martin would have preferred a more respectful distance—he was a little frightened of her that day—but he took the seat indicated nevertheless, thinking it was a strange position for a lady of wealth and a marqueterie worker.

"I—I think that I will take your advice this

time, for you are a shrewd and clear-headed man, and I have learned to have faith in you. What shall I do with all my money?"

Martin was amazed at the question.

"Upon my word, I cannot advise you concerning the disposal of your money. You mean by will?"

"Yes."

"You must decide that weighty matter, Mrs. Henwood," said he. "You know best what claims your relatives have upon you—what friends you possess."

"Mr. Wynn, my relatives—my daughter, that is—is provided for. Her husband has one half of the business—the whole will be his at my death. I do not care to lavish further wealth in that direction—I cannot leave it to a man who must become rich, and I have money on my hands."

"Poor woman!" said Martin, drily.

"Don't satirize me—but advise," she said, vehemently.

"I would think of my friends."

"I have not any," she said, with growing excitement; "in all my circle—and it is an immense circle, embracing hundreds of fine people—there is not one I care for. There is not one, Martin Wynn, who will shed a tear at my death, or put mourning on for me after I am gone. I cannot—think—of one!"

"You have not given yourself much time for thought," said Martin; "this is a matter not to be decided upon in a moment of rash excitement—and you are excited."

"Am I?" she said, with a faint smile, and trying to assume a calmer demeanour on the instant; "that is a fancy of yours—I am very cool and collected."

"You will pardon me for paining you again with allusion to a subject that is objectionable," said Martin, "but you have poor relations on your sister's side."

"Don't speak of them! Would you have me leave money to Fernwell the convict?"

"Well—no. But to Fernwell's son—the man who is honest—the man of whom I have spoken to you."

"I can't bear to hear his name," she said, shuddering; "I will not think of him. He is rising slowly in the world, you say, and he *is* honest. My money would only make him wretched—launch him into a new life, that would bring forth all the evil qualities—the Fernwell blood—sleeping in him now. I will not be his temptress."

"There are ways—"

"I will not leave him a penny!" she exclaimed; "I will not listen to such advice as that."

"Very well," said Martin; "we will dismiss the subject—and you may think of Teddy Fernwell

another time, perhaps. I would not wholly forget him in my will, for the sake of the dead sister, madam."

"Would you advise me to leave money to hospitals?—to charities?"

"You might do worse than think of the suffering and the poor. Nay, you should think a little of them now, and help them now—meeting with your reward even on earth, in the joy and gratitude that would follow your beneficence."

"I haven't the courage to face affliction—and I don't like ragged people. No," with a sigh, "I can't play Lady Bountiful. I may think of some institutions in my will—not before."

"I am at the end of my advice, Mrs. Henwood," said Martin; "I feel that I am in a false position already."

"You have no advice to offer a woman who is entirely alone in the world?—who is tired, heartily tired, Martin Wynn, of that world, seeing truly enough at last how false and hollow it is?—I have striven all my life for a place in it, and having gained it—I collapse!"

She struck her hand upon the scroll end of her couch with a violence that must have hurt her.

"I told you long ago that such a world as yours was not worth all the study that you made of it, madam. To hear you rail against its vanities is

to assure me that you are a better and less heartless woman."

"God forgive me!—I am a wicked woman!" she cried; "growing more wicked, for the want of one true heart and one stout arm to help me on the better way. I would give up all to be happy for the remainder of my life—I would even become poor!"

"So great a sacrifice is surely not demanded."

"Why don't you advise me to marry again?" she said, hoarsely; "I am not an old woman—I may live many years—I ought to study myself a little, now no one studies me. Why should I live in this great house alone, listening to the sneers of the men and women who take my wages?—set aside by a daughter who despises me, and a son-in-law who hates me—summoning sometimes a crowd here to dispel my melancholy, knowing all the while that everyone who seeks me has his jest at my infirmities. I will not live this life any longer. I have changed!"

"Marry, you say? But with no friends to choose from, Mrs. Henwood—with no faith in your set, I would advise you, very earnestly this time, to remain single."

"I am a proud woman—but I would sink my pride for one scrap of true affection. I am a rich woman, but I would give all my money to him who would teach me by his nobleness, his truth-

fulness, to love him as he deserved—I would exult even in the ridicule of the fine people with whom I should lose *caste*, and I would shake them all away from me and—be glad. Will you advise me now?"

"I cannot advise you further, Mrs. Henwood."

"Will you—you, Martin Wynn, protect me?" she gasped forth.

"Protect you!—madam!"

"Against myself—against the world—I am very weak! I ask you to take me from my high estate; I sink all my pride, my womanly reserve, knowing that you can never speak. Make me your wife!"

"Mrs. Henwood—you—you—are—not yourself to-day," said Martin, rising.

"Don't leave me yet!" she cried, clutching his arm; "advise me what to do. I am alone in the world—I **LOVE YOU!**"

CHAPTER IV.

MARTIN'S ANSWER.

“I LOVE you!”

A strange confession for a proud woman to make to a man; stranger still for Mrs. Henwood to make to Martin Wynn. Even yet Martin could scarcely believe in the reality of the present hour. He must have gone to sleep over his marqueterie work in that front room in Griffin Street, and Christie entering presently would rouse him from his nap, and laugh with him at the oddity of his dream.

And yet—it must be reality, he thought, when he had recovered his breath, and was sitting once more on the couch to which Mrs. Henwood's clutch upon his arm had reduced him. He could follow the thread of that afternoon's incidents too closely, from the first start by railway till that moment; and there was too much evidence of reality in the flushed face and fierce eyes of the lady at his side.

“No—no—I hope not, Mrs. Henwood,” he said.

“Why do you say that?” she exclaimed pas-

sionately; "for my sake or yours? Are you ready to fling me back upon myself—you the only man in whom I can trust? Will you stand aloof and shame me utterly?"

"I will only ask you, in a less excited moment, to think how foolish all this is—how poor a jest to try my firmness—how pitiable it makes me and you."

"I am in no mood for jesting—I lo—"

"Don't say it again," said Martin very quickly, and yet with a gentleness that arrested her at once. "A woman had better die than own such words, unasked, to a man—even a woman alone in her splendour, and twice as friendless as you tell me that you are. Spare yourself, madam, needless humiliation, or you will look back upon this day with lasting regret."

"It is a day to be remembered; for I have spoken the truth in it," she said bitterly; "and I face a truth that is sterner—do I not? You are not a man to prevaricate, and—you will answer me?"

"Answer—what?"

"That you do not love me—can never love me. Tell me so at once, and end my folly, sir."

She turned her head away from him, and looked down at the carpet, bending her face very low to hide such bitter burning tears as can only escape women cast down by their own rash acts. Martin

was moved, but he responded to her answer, as she had wished it.

“I am sorry—but it is impossible that I can ever make you my wife,” he said.

“I cannot tempt you with my riches,” she answered; “you would not marry for them, at least—and you do not like me for myself. I have seen it, oh! so long ago!”

“Pardon me—but I have felt very much for your peculiar position, and have even sorrowed with you, at a distance. Our lives have crossed and recrossed in too singular a manner, and been too constantly affected by the same plots and people around us, for me to be devoid of interest in you. You will do me the justice to believe this—and I will ask you to do yourself the justice to remember that you are a lady born, and I am of a class beneath you. There, dry your eyes, and think no more about it—it’s not worth a second thought.”

“Not of yours,” she said facing him again; “you always cold and equable and hard, can afford to reason thus—but I am a baffled woman. You don’t know how I have struggled not to love you—how for eight years, now, the woman’s pride or the woman’s vanity of place, has kept me at arm’s length, trying to believe that it was impossible to think of you. I was a fool—granted, Martin Wynn—but oh! I should have been a

happy one with you. I know that now—I see that now."

"I think that you would have been unhappy," said he; "for this is romance, and I belong to everyday life."

• "You were different to all the world that I had met," she continued taking no heed of his protest; "you changed me despite myself; you were ever before me; you were earnest, truthful, and manly, and I had encountered nothing but deceit, and love of gain, and liars. I found out your true character, long since—I watched for it—I set others to watch—and in all actions of your life, I found such nobleness that had you been a beggar in the streets, I should have loved you, Martin."

"Come—come, this makes me blush worse than ever," said Martin, trying hard to assume a lighter tone. "I can't sit here, and listen to this nonsense about my nobleness and manliness, and so forth. I have tried to do my duty in life as well as I could, and I have kept my hands out of other people's pockets. There are thousands like me."

"No—no!"

"There are hundreds of thousands better than I in the world, or this would be a poor England; there are hundreds of thousands nearer your own class from whom to choose a husband, Mrs. Henwood."

"I have no friends, sir," she said humbly; "I am entirely alone in the world—dependent on my own weak judgment."

"Weak judgment—yes—or you would never have surprised me by this rash avowal."

"Rash, and I have been finding courage to tell you for years. Well," she said, looking at him again, "I have told you—I am glad of that. It takes a weight from me—even the shame that it causes me now cannot lie so heavy as my secret. Oh, Martin!" she cried more impetuously, "I would have been so proud of you—I would have made others—even of my own class—so proud of you too. And you cast me off!"

"No—I cast you not from me—I but save you from the misery of an ill-assorted union."

"Have you—have you *any* intention of marrying again, Mr. Wynn?" she asked—"is there anybody—anywhere?"

"Forty-five next birthday, both of us, and talking of love, and marriage, and 'intentions,' like two young fools of one-and-twenty!" said Martin—"hang it! let us have a hearty laugh at this, and say good afternoon."

"Why don't you answer my question?" she said, fretfully.

"Is there anybody—anywhere?" repeated Martin—"anybody of whom I think tenderly—anywhere? Yes, I hope there is—in heaven."

"Ha!" said Mrs. Henwood, "you are true to *her*, now?"

"Christie's mother, you mean?" said Martin, with a touching earnestness of tone—"well, yes. I never loved another woman before I met her, and all the great love I had for her went down into the grave along with her coffin. I have never thought of marrying again—I have never wished in all this after life to call another woman my wife. I say not a word," he added, "against second marriages, and those who make them, and are happy in them—only they are of a different stuff to me, somehow—that's all."

"Less true—less large-hearted," said Mrs. Henwood, drying her tears with a hasty hand—"like myself more, Mr. Wynn. But then I never loved my husband; he was a relative, and forced upon me for his wealth, and he brought another curse or two to keep my soul down, instead of a blessing, with my marriage. There, forgive me, and say nothing about the grand offer that I have made you," she said, with a sickly smile—"it's all past, and gone."

"I hope so."

"I shall never be able to look you in the face I think," she said, nervously; "but if I find the courage, don't turn away, or be afraid of my making love to you ever again; give me your moral support, if I need it—teach me, if I ask

you, to become a less guilty wretch than I am."

"Hard names, which I don't like to hear, Mrs. Henwood."

"I am guilty—very guilty," she repeated, mournfully; "you would have turned from me with a greater loathing if you could have known all the baseness and sordidness of my disposition. If I could tell you all—if I dared!"

"Tell me nothing more," said Martin, fearful of fresh embarrassments, and anxious to escape them, "or tell me on another occasion, when both of us are calmer. You are looking at life through a distorting glass, and every little weakness is magnifying itself to the proportions of a great sin. You will see clearly to-morrow. Courage, Mrs. Henwood—you are not old or weak yet, and the best days may be advancing."

"Go now," she murmured.

He extended his hand towards her.

"You have done me a great honour," he said, "and I consider it a higher honour than I ever in life expected to receive. I must not go away without thanking you for this—I am not ungrateful, I hope, for the high opinion of me which you have expressed, and which, if I don't fight hard against, will make me vainer from to-day. I thank you, Mrs. Henwood, for your confidence, your—your esteem, and I am sure that you will

be glad presently that I have acted with fairness, saving you from an illusion. Good-bye."

"God bless you!" she ejaculated, seizing his hand in both her own; "forgive me—and good-bye."

In her excitement, her want of self-restraint, she would have pressed her lips upon his hand, if he had let her. But he gently held her back with his other hand, and then, murmuring, "Spare me—spare yourself," went out of the room.

When he had gone—when the door had closed—Mrs. Henwood slid from the couch to the ground, and gave way altogether. She was alone in the world, and could indulge herself in this luxury of grief; there was no one in that house whose place it was to comfort her, or offer one kind word.

CHAPTER V.

GOOD AND BAD NEWS.

MRS. HENWOOD did not send to her old servant, Charles Wynn, the cheque for the same amount that she had tendered Martin ; in the impulse of the better moments, of the feelings that, in her love-storm, had surged uppermost, she forwarded a cheque for a larger amount, enclosing with it a few lines that astonished herself as well as the recipient. She was a woman who *had* changed ; she was right in that verdict. Charles Wynn received the letter early in the evening ; Teddy, coming home from work, met the postman at the door, and brought the letter upstairs in his hand.

“Here, sir,” he said, laughing as he entered the room, “the ladies are looking you up again. This is a lady’s letter, I’m sure, by the scrawl!”

Teddy seemed in good spirits that evening ; he had a duty to perform, he thought, in keeping the hearts light of these two Wynns, and if he were less cheerful at times, it was only when he had himself for company. He believed that he was

serving Martin Wynn faithfully yet, when he was doing his best to play the son and brother in that house, and his efforts did him a fair amount of good. He was unaware of the fact that he possessed a large share of true philosophy; he faced the worst, and made up his mind to endure it patiently, and as best he might; not for an instant had it struck him that it was necessary to bemoan his fate, or give way. He was content, he thought; sorry for the cause that had separated him from the one man of whom he made a hero, but believing that it was all for the best, and resigned to the changes which had come to him. So he would do his best still, scared a little now and then by that prison shadow which *would* oppress him, but pushing forwards by degrees, and having at his heart one ambition, of which the Wynns were wholly ignorant. It was an ambition that belonged to the future—a far-away future, when Christie Wynn was married, and Martin was an old man, when he could go to Griffin Street, and be his master's friend again. Then that ambition might be gratified, and he and Martin together might work out the scheme he had in view, and for which he was already saving hard—a scheme to help the poor, and weak, and sinful.

So Teddy Fernwell, set apart from those he loved best, unacknowledged by a brother rising in the world, pursued his quiet way, none the worse

for his change, but bearing up manfully against his little misfortunes, and striving to present a cheerful countenance to those with whom his every-day life brought him in contact. He was not quite so embarrassed now to meet Martin, and he could even face Christie without a blush and a stammer, though he lingered not longer in her company than he could help.

He came into the room that summer evening with Mrs. Henwood's letter in his hand, astonishing the old gentleman by his vigour, and changing the old place on the instant into something brighter.

“A lady's letter for me!” said Mr. Wynn, startled as usual out of his nap in a corner of his capacious chair, “get out with you!”

“It's Christie's handwriting, perhaps,” suggested Polly, very busy with her dressmaking.

“No, it isn't,” said Teddy, decisively. “Christie doesn't turn out such a spider's scrawl as this, or shake the ink all of a lump into the last word.”

“Then it's a mistake,” said Mr. Wynn, “unless——”

He paused to take a deep breath; the brightness of his new idea was a little too much for him.

“Unless it's from Mrs. Henwood,” continued this lucid old gentleman. “It isn't very likely, but she might think, one of these fine days, of my length of service, and—and thank me for it.”

“Oh! never mind Mrs. Henwood,” said Teddy,

cheerfully. "Perhaps she never thinks—or never learnt to write, sir."

"Or has got too much to think about, for an old fellow like me to come across her mind," concluded the old man; "but still, if I had been—"

"Dear, dear, why don't you open the letter, father!" cried Polly, full of nervous excitement, and pricking her finger at every alternate stitch.

"No—let us guess," said Teddy; "let us spin out the sensation—it isn't often we get such a brush up to our faculties. Now, you say, dad, it's from Mrs. Henwood?"

"No, I say it's bad news," corrected Mr. Wynn. "We've been much too comfortable for a long while, with you laughing about here, and making us laugh and feel younger. We're going to have a stop put to that. If this is from Mrs. Henwood, she has given me notice to leave next Saturday."

"Oh! you haven't had your nap out," cried Teddy. "I say it's good news—unless it's the income-tax coming down upon you for arrears. And Miss Polly says it's good news too—don't you?"

"To be sure I do," said Polly. "Why, who's going to take the trouble to send him bad news at his age? And if it is the notice to quit," Polly had evidently been impressed by her father's lugubrious prophecy, though she was bearing up against it as well as she could, "why, that's good

news, for we shall have more of you at home, and less rheumatics."

Mr. Wynn had polished his spectacles, and put them on by this time; even the ancient terrier woke up suddenly, and looked at his master. The letter was opened, and the cheque fluttered out and fell to the floor.

"Oh!—it's one of Martin's games," said Mr. Wynn, as Teddy stooped and picked it up; "he's sending money here again, and I thought that I'd stopped that nonsense long ago. No—it's—IT IS! It's come at last!—didn't I say it would? Now, God bless her, to think that she thanks me, and sees what a help I've been to the place!—and, oh! dear—how much does she say? Here, Teddy, this can't be a one and two noughts—it ain't possible!"

Teddy opened the cheque, and announced that the bearer was to be paid one hundred pounds. Teddy took the letter from the old man's hands, and read Mrs. Henwood's thanks for Mr. Wynn's life-long service, and the expression of her hope that Mr. Wynn would accept the enclosed cheque for a hundred pounds, as an earnest of her gratitude.

Mr. Wynn shed tears, laughed, crowed with delight, rose and walked up and down the room, shaking hands with his daughter and Teddy—even, in a sudden fit of importance, almost got his back straight.

“I knew she wasn’t the woman to forget anybody. And this is money which I can take—gratefully, of course—but which I’ve earned to them, I hope, in one way or t’other. I knew the Henwoods were a good sort—every one of them! Careful of their money, perhaps, and making quite sure that it was spent on worthy objects—taking their time to make sure, as is proper enough. A hundred pounds!”

“What shall we do with it?” said Polly. “Good gracious!—what bank’s safe, I wonder, to put such a lot in, all at once?”

“I think that I shall invest in Indian stocks, or reduced counsels,” said Mr. Wynn with much gravity. “Where have you got *your* money, Teddy?—and do you have your interest reg’lar?”

“I’m in the counsels, sir—it’s handy to draw out.”

This was not answered ironically, though Teddy knew better. Teddy would not have said consols for the world, after Mr. Wynn, lest he should have hurt the old man’s feelings.

“Polly shall write to Martin to-night, or go over herself and break the news,” said the old man. “You’d better start at once, and Teddy shall take care of you and the cheque. Give Martin the cheque, and ask him to buy a lot of the counsels as cheap as he can for us. And to-morrow we’ll pay our personal respects to Mrs. Henwood, and thank her very much.”

“And after that,” said Polly, “we’ll think about retiring from business—eh, father? This may be a hint that you are too old to stand the hard winter—and is offered as a pension.”

“I hope not. That would hurt me very much,” said Mr. Wynn, “for I was thinking that I should like to serve her ever so long yet—to die in harness, to show that I never flinched right up to the end. Yes—I should like to die in harness! When I aint *really* of use I can give up, Polly, but I can’t see the man to mind that wharf like me. Don’t frighten me with such awful thoughts as those, Miss.”

“Oh! I am so sorry!” cried Polly, embracing her father on the spot; “it was only a fancy, for Mrs. Henwood does not say a word about your leaving.”

“I should think not, indeed!”

“It’s just likely that that little Zach of ours has talked it over with the mistress,” said Mr. Wynn thoughtfully; “for he don’t forget us, I know. Why, didn’t he come when he was a gentleman to see Polly—and then me? How strange it comes round, now, if Zach’s in this!”

“Very strange,” said Teddy ruefully; “I wish he were.”

“I don’t—though I respect Zach, of course,” said Mr. Wynn; “I’d prefer it came from her direct—that’s how it ought to be. Well, it’s very

lucky to come in time—it'll leave you comfor'ble, Polly, whenever it pleases the Lord to take me off night-duty—it'll be always a help to you. I don't think I ever was so happy in my life—so free like!"

He put on his coat and prepared to depart. Polly equipped herself for walking; the responsibility of this large sum of money was evidently too much for her.

"You'll go with her, Teddy, to Martin's," said the watchman; "she aint careful of the crossings, and p'raps you'd better take care of the money. She's like a baby when she's flustered."

"I'll see her to the house, sir," said Teddy evasively.

"I daresay Martin will come back with you and congratulate me—I should like him, if he had the time. He knows where to find *me* always after eight."

They went out together, parting at the street-door, and going their separate ways—the proud old gentleman to his duties, his daughter and Teddy to Griffin Street. Before they were out of hearing he called to them, and they returned.

"Who's got the money?"

"I have," said Polly, "tucked down tight enough, you may be sure. I'm not going to lose our fortune."

"See she don't drop it going along, there's a good boy," he said to Teddy, laughing the instant

afterwards at his remark, and adding, “a big boy, certainly, and a boy always to me that has been very good and kind. God bless you, *Teddy!*”

Teddy bowed his head, and accepted the benediction gratefully and reverently. The old man turned to *Polly*.

“And I nearly forgot to say, ‘God bless you,’ child. And I’ve said it every night before I went to business punctually—always said it, and to nearly forget it like this! Ah! my good luck has turned my head a little.”

“But we’re all coming back,” said *Polly*, “Martin and Christie and all—I’m sure they’ll both come to wish you joy with Mrs. *Henwood*’s gift.”

“It’s not business—but I shall be glad to see them, just for once, in business hours. Take care of that girl, *Teddy*—she’s worth her weight in gold to-night.”

And with this weak little joke, *Mr. Wynn*, with *Speck* at his heels, turned back upon his way.

Teddy and *Polly*, arm-in-arm together; *Polly* proud of her escort—so stalwart, young, and strong an escort, too—reached *Griffin Street* without losing the hundred pounds. At the door of *Martin Wynn*’s house, *Teddy* dropped the hand upon his arm.

“You’ll come in to-night?”

Teddy shook his head.

“I would rather not,” he said.

“They will be glad to see you,” said Polly; “it’s no good going on in this foolish way—you’re not afraid of them?”

“No—not now; but I have made a promise to myself.”

“Not to go in here—never!”

“Not till she’s married, at all events,” said Teddy, forcing a laugh; “there—you don’t want me to wait?”

“Yes, I do. Why, Martin and Christie may be at chapel—and you’ll have to take care of me and the money all the way back again.”

“Very well—I’ll wait.”

Teddy took up his position with his back to the lamp-post, after Polly had been admitted into the house. He had promised to wait, and although he wished that he had reminded Polly that if she appeared not within five minutes, he should leave her to her brother’s escort home, yet having made his promise, he did not think of breaking it, on account of future embarrassments rising with the night. He waited there, and thought of Mrs. Henwood and of her last act of gratitude. He was as grateful for that, as though he had been one of the Wynn family, or Mrs. Henwood had thought of him in a way that was appropriate. He stood there an hour—meeting in that hour one or two Griffin Street folk, who knew him and

had liked him, as he had always been liked, lucky fellow, in every estate through which he had passed. Good and bad people, saints and sinners, had all taken to Teddy, and seen something to admire in him ; and on that evening he was compelled to encounter a few questions, as to where he had been "all that long time, and why he had left Martin Wynn's, and what he was doing, and whether he was doing well?" as all his questioners wished he really was. Finally, the door opened, and Martin, Polly, and Christie emerged into Griffin Street—as he had expected and prepared for.

"Glad to see you, Teddy," said Martin, shaking hands with him ; "though you might have come in with Polly, and not have frightened anybody. Why, there's nothing inside to hurt you!"

Martin intended this for a jest, to set Teddy at his ease ; but it had the contrary effect, as he might have anticipated, had he been as thoughtful as his wont. Teddy stammered, looked confused, and even annoyed ; he was not a man to jest, or to understand a jest, on a matter that was ever solemn to him. Christie came to the rescue, and hoped that he was well, looking shyly towards the man whose story she knew by heart now, and whom she loved the better for it.

Polly Wynn was a woman—therefore a match-maker. She had a high opinion of Teddy too—for

she had had many opportunities of seeing him at his best. She had almost a higher opinion of Teddy than of his brother Zach, or her own brother Martin.

“Now, Martin, I’ve a great deal to tell you,” she said, hooking herself on adroitly to his arm; “family matters, with which these young things have nothing to do. Teddy, where’s your politeness this evening? See to Christie, and don’t leave her staring there like a great goose.”

“Oh!—yes—certainly.”

Teddy looked wistfully into Martin’s face, which betrayed nothing that evening except the good temper of its possessor—stammered, blushed, and finally offered his arm in a very awkward manner to Christie. He had not prepared for this, and he was taken off his guard. It was running counter to all his sternest resolutions, of which they might have caught a glimpse, but would never give him credit for in their entirety. No one in the world except himself understood his peculiar firmness, he thought. Far ahead of him the dull road, the even track that he could never miss, and he proceeding thereon doggedly to the end, with his back to the sun and the east wind in his face. He should find friends upon his road, and win many men’s esteem—let that be sufficient for one who had sinned so much, and repented so intensely as he had done—for one who still, for Zach’s sake,

nursed the lie that had made a difference in many lives.

Christie was somewhat confused at Polly's manœuvres also; she had learned to look at the shady side of this romance, and to accept the position. She was content—almost—with life as it was. Teddy's embarrassment brought her round to herself, however, and with that ready tact in leaping back to quiescence, which is not uncommon in ladies "put out a bit," she was speedily herself and at her ease.

Thus they proceeded towards Upper Ground Street, a few yards in advance of Martin and his sister—and Teddy found his natural voice by degrees. He was assured that Martin had kept his secret, and that Christie had never guessed it, was this wise youth; therefore he assumed a character appropriate to the occasion, that might have deceived less clear-sighted people than the Wynns. He talked rather too much at last, and was too much like the old Teddy to be genuine; but he fancied that he was doing it very well indeed, and as he had only himself to satisfy, that was sufficient. He was sure that no one could have guessed, by his business-like face, his business-like conversation, how intensely happy he was that night with Christie's hand upon his arm, resting there in all sisterly faith, which she would not have allowed had she known all! A little hand, that was

tucked under his arm trustfully, instead of the tips of two or three fingers balancing themselves on one particular spot on his coat. Yes, he was intensely happy—this was one of his nights to be marked with a white stone ; he thought so then—he looks back at it, now it is darker and made more memorable by subsequent events, and realizes the blissful feeling of that walk through London streets. He had been her companion in many walks before—when she was a girl, and he was “growing good ;” when she was a young woman and he was her escort to chapel on Sunday evenings sometimes ; when he loved her just as well as in the present hour, but when they were not days of happiness like this one ! There was something strange and touching in this walk ; it had chanced upon him ; he had felt very lonely in himself, despite the efforts that he had made to hide his loneliness, and the sudden burst of light upon him was to be enjoyed keenly, if furtively.

He had no doubt that he was making himself out a very mercenary being to Christie, when he spoke of Stanley and Burns ; but that did not affect his happiness in the least. The business topic was to deceive her ; and he could talk upon business and think of his good fortune with her at the same time, like a Teddy with two heads.

“I always made up my mind to rise in the world a little,” said Teddy ; “and so I went to

Stanley and Burns, where I got higher wages. I'm saving very rapidly, Miss Christie."

"I am very glad to hear that," said Christie demurely.

"They put me on all the best work," said Teddy; "and of course it's a pleasure to be thought a great deal of. It's a greater pleasure to think that I am following in your father's steps and have been lucky to excel in his own art."

"He always thought that you would excel, Teddy," answered Christie.

"Yes, I remember," said he, ruefully. "I was always clever with my eyes and fingers. Brought up long ago to look sharp after everything, and pick up anything in my way."

He had a dismal satisfaction in referring to those old times ; he fancied that he was acting fairly to Martin Wynn's daughter by alluding to them now—by letting her keep in remembrance that past estate from which he had arisen. He even hazarded a short laugh at the conclusion, as though it was a good joke. Christie regarded him with an intentness that made him colour again.

"You do not make a jest of that ?" she asked.

"A jest—God forbid!"

"Why speak of it at all ?" she said with a voice that had the faintest tone of anger in it. Had she guessed Teddy's motive in thrusting the subject upon her ?

“I like to think of it sometimes.”

“Why?”

“It keeps me in my place,” he answered; “shows me what I am fit for, and what I am *not* fit for.”

“Your brother Zachary—does he think like this?” asked Christie.

“Oh, that’s very different,” replied Teddy. “Zach was the mother’s boy, and the mother had gentle blood in her, and a horror of thieves. She got on worse because she was more honest, it seemed, and Zach starved with her, whilst I was in *training*. He can afford to forget his past, I think—at all events, there is nothing in it that can bring a shame to him to look back upon.”

“How can you be sure of that?”

Teddy flinched. No—he was not sure.

“Nothing to bring shame to him in the mother’s time,” he corrected, although it sounded but a repetition of his former assertion; “I daresay he has forgotten his past. In his place I might.”

“You never see him?”

“Yes, I do. I catch a glimpse of him at Hennwood’s Wharf occasionally. I sit by the window and see him occasionally drive in and out, in that carriage he has set up. He don’t look so well as I could wish—I’m afraid that he’s in too great a hurry to grow rich.”

“A strange brother,” murmured Christie.

"I don't see that," said Teddy, returning to his old part. "I should have acted just the same in his place."

"What stories you are telling, Teddy!" said Christie.

"I—I really think I should," said he more energetically. "I should have worked as hard at the business, and tried to get rich as fast as he."

"Turning your back upon the brother?"

"Only for a time, till I could surprise him with a lift upwards also—just as Zach will surprise me."

"You think that?"

"Sometimes," answered Teddy drily; "but I don't build upon it. Zach is married now, and has a wife's interests to study before his vagabond brother. But there's good feeling in Zach, and you and I will see it developed more plainly in a year or two. He's a good fellow at heart."

"You should know best," said Christie, doubtfully.

"I'm glad to see him strong and hard, and full of energy," said Teddy, continuing a subject that seemed "safe" to dwell on; "for my impression of him was, that he was always rather weak than otherwise. Inclined to be led by others—instead of taking the lead himself. It's a great change, and I'm very glad of that."

"You have not seen his wife?"

“Once at a distance on a grass plat with him,” replied Teddy—“a trifle too tall for little Zach; but then that does not matter, if she’s fond of him. It was a love-match, and so another stroke of luck for the young rascal; for when a man and woman really—By George! I’m talking like a book, and a book full of nonsense, too. What work is your father upon now?”

So the conversation took a sober and practical turn, and the chance that Christie Wynn had had passed away from her for good. She had wished for the chance, and it had come to her during one portion of the dialogue, and then her natural shyness had stood in the way. She had wished to dwell more upon Teddy’s past life, and had almost found the courage to hint—being very fond of this tall, plain, earnest-faced man—that the past was not worth considering if the present were good; that *no one* thought anything but the better of Teddy for his new life; and even that he should not act as if he thought that it debarred him from *anything*; when the subject had drifted somehow to Zach, and now from Zach to her father’s pursuits—a topic that she had always grown eloquent upon until that night.

But still it was a happy walk for her, as well as for Teddy. It was like the old times, “with a difference;” it presaged a better understanding in the future between her father and him—between him

and herself. She was full of FAITH now—for she, in her confident little heart, believed that she should marry Teddy presently. She had been very doubtful until then—now she could take hope to herself, and bide her time—waiting, “oh! ever so many years,” and feeling assured that he would wait, and never think of any body else. She believed that she was acquainted with every turn of Teddy’s character; she saw clearly enough his motive for leaving Griffin Street, and that constituted him her hero. She had loved him long ago, she knew now, for his reverence for her father, his gratitude, his thorough self-denial—and now she only wanted an opportunity to let him see her love. She would never tell him—if he could not find it out; but from that night she hoped that he would make the discovery one day, and not be so tiresome with his humility and bashfulness! Yes, one day he would see all the truth—she was very young still, and could afford to wait as well as he.

At Upper Ground Street at last, and waiting for Polly and Martin to come up with them. Martin was gently reproving his sister as they came within hearing of them.

“It never struck me before that you were so horribly slow in your movements, Polly,” he said. “How you have crawled along, to be sure! It is just as if you had done it on purpose.”

“What should I want to walk slowly for?” said Polly. “I’m sure that we’ve kept this couple in sight all the way.”

“Perhaps they’ve been walking slowly too, to aggravate us,” added Martin. “Pull the bell, Teddy, and rouse the echoes of Henwood’s Wharf. I suppose it’s not appropriate to this place to receive the old gentleman with three cheers.”

Teddy rang the bell, and Speck immediately responded, barking with all his might for an instant, and then following up with a low and miserable whine, that was not peculiar to Speck.

“Hollo!” said Martin, “what ails Speck to-night?”

The four stood there waiting for the advancing feet of Charles Wynn, watchman. But the well-known shuffle of the feet, the tap, tap of the stick, did not follow as usual upon the clangor of the warehouse bell.

“He’s deafer than usual to-night, poor old gentleman,” said Martin. “Ring again, Teddy.”

Teddy and Martin looked at each other in a strange inquiring manner—there came to both of them one thought; Teddy rang, however, again, and Speck’s bark answered him.

“Something wrong!” they both ejaculated, and then Teddy darted into the roadway, ran a few yards down the street to the next gates, which were lower, and opened on a yard; gave one spring to-

floor; but there had been no money found anywhere; the discovery had followed closely upon the attack, and only the poor old watchman had suffered. How he had suffered, shrewd gentlemen from Scotland Yard made guesses at; there had been no deliberate attempt to incapacitate the watchman in the first instance, they thought; the thieves had probably found their way into the place from the river, and had done their best to get through the noisy part of their work before Mr. Wynn's arrival; then had ensued Mr. Wynn's alarm, a probable rush of the thieves from the premises, an ineffectual attempt of the watchman to grapple with one of them, an ugly blow on the back of the head, or a violent thrust backwards, that caused the blow in falling, and thus put the house of Wynn in mourning for the next twelve months.

Yes, evidently that inner dock had been of service to the thieves, for there was Henwood's boat aground, and footprints in the mud—more than footprints, a regular upheaving of the bottom of the dock, as though there had been a dance there, or a fight, or a general "shake down," ending with a procession of footprints that seemed to march directly into the river, ostensibly winding up the ill-success of the adventure by suffocation in Thames water.

Measurements were taken before the tide came up again, and Scotland Yard folk were very busy

for an hour or two. Zach had arrived by this time—he had been sent for in a hurry—and Mr. Tinchester and the partner went into committee on this daring attempt to rob the premises, whilst a bitter grief found vent across the way. Zach came to the door of that house, haggard enough with excitement, about one in the morning, and Teddy came down to speak to him. So with the shadow of death in Upper Ground Street, the brothers met again. Always something strange to bring these two together.

“You will not come up now, Zach,” said Teddy, without any preliminary greeting, “they can’t see anybody.”

“Who is there?”

“All of them.”

“Tell them that I am very sorry,” said Zach ; “that anything that I can do——”

“Leave that to me,” interrupted his brother.

“A hard end to a life that has been hard,” muttered Zach ; “why did he not leave the place before, I wonder! He must have been near upon eighty years of age, poor fellow! Is there any one behind you, there?”

“No one.”

“Come into the street—I wish to speak to you, where I can be sure that we may not be overheard.”

Teddy followed his brother into the middle of

but there were times when he thought it best for Richard Fernwell, if he was the murderer, to escape—best for him and for those whom he had cast into mourning. He thought it strange sometimes that Martin Wynn never spoke of his father in connection with the outrage—never put together the present crime with that past conspiracy which had been thwarted. It was all so long ago—and the marqueterie worker probably never called to mind that old story. Teddy was sure—and he was glad—that Martin had forgotten it.

At all events, thought Teddy, he must find his father and know the whole truth. Afterwards to act as he thought best and most just. To screen, to pardon, to deliver up to the vengeance of the law, he scarcely knew which—but he felt that he would like to see his father; that, by some means or other, he must see him. He did not believe it possible that poor old Wynn had been deliberately sacrificed; and he would have given all he possessed in the world to hear that it was chance that had killed him. He was unhappy in the midst of these thoughts, and the desire to find his father increased upon him. He had even a faint hope that it might not be his father after all—that other hands had broken open Henwood's counting-house; that Richard Fernwell was innocent of the deed, and that the discovery might take this new load from his heart.

Teddy went in search of Richard Fennwell, then. In the spare moments of his work, in the early morning, when thieves and spies were sleeping, in the "dinner hour," when he went without dinner to look for him; late at night, when the places he explored were full of danger, Teddy hunted for his sire. But the search had baffled the police—or the police were hanging back, anticipative of a higher reward, and of Henwood and Henwood adding an extra fifty pounds, possibly—and Teddy was baffled also.

This strange quest preyed on Teddy, and rendered him strange. Those who were full of grief for Charles Wynn even began to remark his eccentricity. He was seldom at home in Upper Ground Street; and Polly stitched and cried in that top room, and the brightness which she always pointed out to others was beyond her ken. Martin and Christie called very often, talked of a new scheme that they had, in which Polly was concerned, waited till a late hour to see Teddy now and then, and left, none the better for waiting. So three or four weeks went by; no Richard Fennwell was found; there had ensued a murder more sensational, and "something like a burglary"—twenty thousand pounds worth of jewelry decamped with, and the detectives in search of prey that had left a decent trail behind it. But Teddy persevered, and all the London haunts that he had known in his time

were visited one by one. It was a soul-depressing search ; it affected him, and weighed heavily upon him ; it seemed to his imagination as if he were drifting back to his old awful life, and there was no escape from it. It became almost a monomania with him ; he must see his father and hear the whole truth. If that father had been the cause of the old man's death, why, that was one more barrier between him and the Wynns—as if there had not been barriers enough already in his path ! He would be very glad to hear Richard Fernwell deny all connection with the robbery—he trusted that he might listen to that denial, presently.

From court to court went Teddy, silently and persistently ; amongst the thieves' quarters, Whitechapel way, Cates Street, Green Street, &c. ; at the free-and-easy drinking-shops in Ratcliffe Highway ; down as far as Wapping, even, where sailors were robbed, and the "profession" thereabouts had always been too violent for Mr. Fernwell ; to every den in Kent Street and adjacent Bermondsey, playing his part there, feigning to be the same Teddy whom a few remembered, drinking and smoking with the rest, praying against the influences that seemed to enwrap and enervate him, and shuddering at the oaths and ribaldry at which he had laughed heartily nine or ten years since. He worked his way to Drury Lane and the Dials

at last ; he chose the places near home, his own places, as the least likely to constitute a den of refuge for Richard Fernwell ; he went to Drag's Court, and made cautiously his inquiries, baffled at every point still.

On one occasion, late at night, he fancied that there flitted by him the figure of his brother Zach ; and he turned to confront it the instant afterwards, but it had vanished like a brain figure that had had no substantiality. It was possible that Zach was also in search of his father, but it did not seem possible that he could so readily elude him. Once also Teddy saw Martin Wynn, and he hid away from him on the dark staircase of a court in "Short's Gardens," and hoped that the suspicion had not come at last to his friend's mind, and that Martin, with sterner motives—motives that were more intelligible—had not also begun *his* search. He had not understood Martin lately, any more than Martin had understood him—the world had darkened very much since that cheque had come to Upper Ground Street.

One more week now, thought Teddy, and he would give up further inquiry for Richard Fernwell, and devote himself to the lonely woman more. She and he but caught passing glimpses of each other through the week, and only on Sundays were they like the mother and son—or brother and elder sister—that they had always been. One week

more, and he would shake off that longing to find his father, and try his best to bring the smiles back to the patient woman's face; he had a belief that his great duty lay in cheering *her* life now, making amends for part of the past wherein she had cheered his and Zach's. She did not care for any society but her own at present, he noticed; she did not seem to miss him, and she fretted a great deal over her dress-making, which set in, in reds, and blues, and greens, and jarred unpleasantly with the deep mourning that she and Teddy wore. On the Sundays they were together; they went to church twice a day together; in the afternoon they looked at Charles Wynn's grave, where Polly cried afresh, and Teddy compressed his lips and thought of his father again, and felt the desire to know all become more intense as he stood there.

One evening late in August, Teddy returned home at eleven in the evening, to find Martin Wynn sitting with Polly. Brother and sister had been talking long and anxiously—talking also very seriously—together, but the discussion had ended an hour ago, and they were waiting up, both of them, for Teddy. He felt almost like a guilty being as he came in, tired and dispirited.

“Late hours, Teddy,” said Martin, gravely surveying him. “What is on at Stanley and Burns’ that they keep you so hard at work there?”

“Nothing particular, sir,” replied Teddy.

"Then you haven't come straight home," said Martin quickly.

"No, sir, I have been for a stroll," said Teddy. "After work at the inlaying, it is—it is almost necessary to take a long walk. I had no idea that it was so late as this."

Neither had he, till he had caught a glimpse of the clock at the public-house in Upper Ground Street.

Martin looked at his watch.

"Yes, it is late," he said; "and Christie all alone, too. Sit down, Teddy, I have been waiting to tell you a little news."

Teddy sat down and looked nervously at Martin Wynn.

"Christie and I have been persuading Polly to give up this place—we have succeeded at last, and Polly thinks of living with us. When the poor gentleman lived it was different, and Polly's duty lay here with him; but Polly alone is not exactly the thing. Some day Polly must take care of me instead of the father—when Christie marries, for instance," he said, looking keenly at his listener.

Teddy started, and opened and shut the hands upon his knees.

"When she marries—exactly, sir," he said, thinking that Martin was waiting for an answer from him.

"There are only three Wynn's left, and it's

hard to be separated. So Polly will drop her independence to-morrow, and come at last to Griffin Street, where you will not desert us altogether."

"I—I have not thought of coming yet, sir; this is news that takes me a little aback."

"You must come to Griffin Street, now and then," urged Martin; "you haven't been the same man since you left it. There, you haven't improved, Teddy," added Martin frankly.

"No—sir. I don't suppose that I have."

"You seem to be—a little unsettled. I don't know the reason—I'll not attempt to find a reason—but I hope that you will not forget the old friend, the old adviser, when a trouble turns up. Losing you, we haven't lost our interest, and we are—all of us—concerned at any change in you."

"I am unsettled," murmured Teddy; "you are very kind, sir. I will fight my way back to my old self in a short while. I shall not give way."

"Give way—why, no!" cried Martin.

"These are strange times," said Teddy; "and I am strange with them. But don't lose your trust in me. I will ask for patience from you all—I repeat that I will fight my way back to my old self."

"And to Griffin Street?"

Teddy did not answer. Further away from

him than ever seemed the home of Martin Wynn.

“And to Griffin Street?” repeated Martin, who had a strong objection to his questions remaining unanswered.

“Presently, sir, perhaps—give me time.”

In the time when he should not be misunderstood or suspected—yes, when Christie was married, it might come to pass.

“So I waited to-night, to confer with you concerning your future intentions—to suggest a new lodging for you, and so on.”

Teddy thought for a moment, then said—

“I shall stay here, sir.”

“Indeed! Why?”

“I am used to the place—it has been a fair home to me—it is full of associations that have kept me grateful, and I shouldn’t like to leave it.”

“God bless you, Teddy!” burst forth Polly Wynn; “it’s what I’ve said to Martin, or it’s what I’ve tried to say.”

Teddy saw that Martin was embarrassed, and that, for some reason not yet explained to him, it was necessary that Polly should go to Griffin Street. He saw, too, very clearly that it was the best for Polly, and he was as quick as his wont with his reply.

“Oh! but with you there will be sad associa-

tions, Miss Polly," he said ; "every time you come into this room you would miss *him*, and it would be opening the wound afresh, and you alone so much would become very dull here. But here I shall be—oh ! quite happy. Here the first good impulse came to me to leave my brother to you—here my brother Zach was saved. This is holy ground!"

Martin laid his large hand on Teddy's arm.

"Teddy, I have been lately full of doubts concerning you—you have terribly bothered me. But I see that it is all right. You, old fellow, will forgive such a fleeting suspicion as mine?"

"I deserved it, sir," said Teddy ; "I have not been myself, and I am not able to explain yet a while, the mystery that has grown round me."

"I can trust you," said Martin, rising.

"Yes—I think you can," answered Teddy.

Martin was uneasy concerning Teddy still ; he did not doubt him then, but he doubted the policy of any mystery between them—mystery he had always abhorred. Teddy's was a trustful nature—if he had made any dangerous acquaintances now !

Martin went away directly afterwards, and Polly and Teddy were left together.

"It will be a great change for us two," he said.

"You are sorry, Teddy?"

"To be sure—I am sorry," answered he. "Sorry

for myself—which is selfish, but glad for you, at all events.”

“I don’t know what is to become of you—what you’ll do without somebody to take care of you.”

“See me take care of myself,” cried Teddy, laughing, or attempting to laugh. “I’ll turn Robinson Crusoe here, and be as happy as he was.”

“But he wasn’t happy.”

“He made himself pretty comfortable under the circumstances.”

“You did not expect this change, Teddy?”

“Well, no. I fancied that you would go on with your dress-making, and I with the marqueterie—you my landlady, and I the lodger and friend. I fancied that I should have to take care of you, Miss Polly, and keep you as bright as I could; but never mind that.”

“It isn’t as if we were about the same age,” said Polly; “but Martin says the lodgers will sneer at us, and even slander us—and Martin knows the world so well. I didn’t think of any one saying a word against you and me.”

“Any one had better not, in my hearing,” said Teddy; “but,” with a great gasp, “I didn’t think of that myself. Confound it!—has anybody said anything?”

“Oh! no. They have all been very kind to me.”

Teddy fell into thought again for awhile.

"It's true enough—people will talk," said Teddy. "Why didn't I think of that before? Can't we stop it?"

"There's nothing to stop, Teddy."

"If things had been different—altogether different," said Teddy, "why, I might have asked you to marry me, Miss Polly, taking pity on my loneliness!"

"Oh! good gracious!" exclaimed Polly, "you are unsettled, or you'd never talk like this, you silly blundering boy you. Why, aint I old enough to be your mother?"

"I don't know," said Teddy, "it's likely enough. But I should have tried hard to make happy one who has been a great a friend to me—I should very much like somebody to live for!"

It was a strange wail from the inner chamber, where all discontent was stored, telling of his sense of loneliness, but of his true devotion to the Wynns. Polly's lip quivered, for she was easily affected at that time. She saw all the truth in Teddy, and her heart was touched by his words.

"Why, you silly goose," she exclaimed, with her first effort at cheerfulness since her father's death, and an odd effort, and under peculiar difficulties, it was, "what next will you think about? A pretty wife I should make you—an old woman close on forty-two! Why, Teddy"—speaking in an excited tone, "Teddy, you foolish fellow, I thought

that I was going to marry your father once!"

Teddy recoiled at this. That secret had never been related to him.

"Marry my father!" he cried. "You?"

"When he was a young man down in Warwickshire, and paid me a little attention. Oh! how different he was then!—what a drop for him! If they had taken him by the hand, the Henwoods, he might have been a respectable man now."

"He broke his word to you?"

"I don't know—sometimes I think that he never meant anything—for I was vain then, and hadn't seen any company; and though he was poor, he was a gentleman."

"No one would have thought him a villain, then," said Teddy, "a schemer, perhaps—a man easily tempted from good—but not a vile hardened wretch as he has since become. Tell me what he was like when you were a girl!"

Then Polly Wynn told the whole story; and Teddy listened with great intentness, and built some hopes from the narrative, forgetting altogether the half proposal that he had recently made to the narrator.

The next day Polly Wynn packed up, and Teddy came home early to help her, and to go into some business accounts. Polly had intended to call in a broker and sell off her furniture—the deal table, the sturdy, well-seasoned chairs, with the

volatile cushions, even the geraniums, dusty, but full-leaved with the summer; but Teddy had wanted the home intact, and could afford to lay out a little in furniture. Business concluded, and the packing finished, there remained only a cab to fetch; and that Teddy procured her, coming home inside so full of thought that he allowed the cabman to pass the house before he remembered where he was.

Then Teddy and the cabman, making several journies downstairs with the boxes, and half filling the interior with choice articles that Polly wished to have under her own eye; after that Polly's visits to the lodgers; finally Polly coming back with Speck under her arm into that front room, where Teddy now waited for her. He saw that Polly was very nervous and childlike in her manners that day, and he assumed, in consequence, a more man-like deportment. He stood up as she entered, and extended both his hands, trying hard for a bright smile, that should keep her firm and win a smile back. But Polly was too nervous and excited to take her cue from him, and she upset all Teddy's arrangements, and nearly Teddy himself, by dropping Speck, and flinging herself suddenly forwards on his chest, and putting her arms, round him.

“To think that I leave you all alone here, boy !” she cried, “and that we break up home together—and you won’t come—I know you won’t—to Grif-

fin Street ! Be a good boy ever, Teddy—I'm sure you will—and don't—oh ! don't forget us !”

“Is it likely—HERE !”

Then he turned away his head to hide a tear or two from her, and told her the instant afterwards that it was very silly to cry, that there was nothing to cry about, that they should see each other more often than she fancied. He got her and Speck downstairs into the cab, and then he shook hands with her and kissed her, as a son might kiss his mother going a long journey.

“God bless you, oldest and best of friends !” he cried ; “you will be sure to find happiness in Martin Wynn's house.”

“I—I hope so.”

Then she gave one upward look at the old lodgings, and was driven away westward.

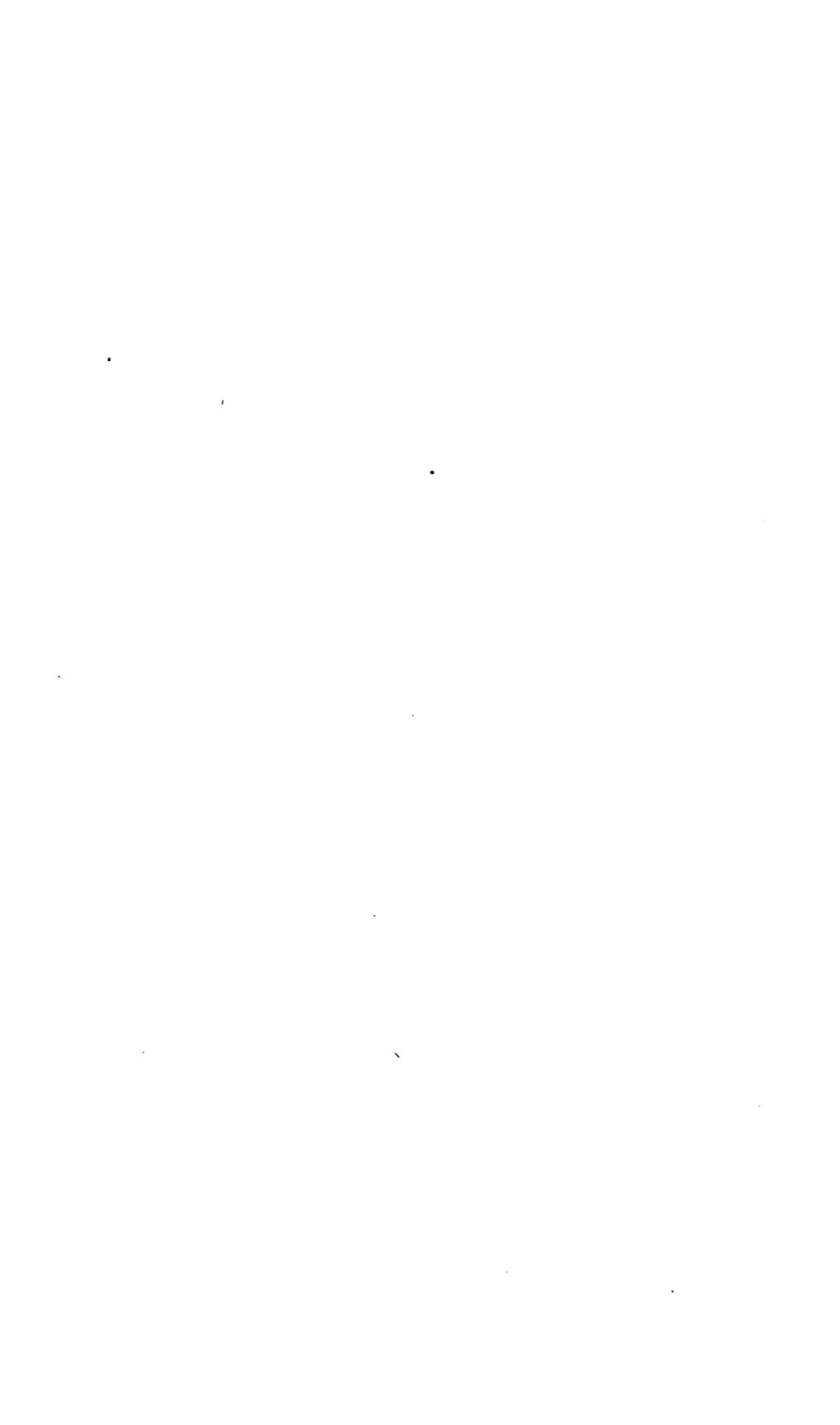
Teddy watched the cab out of sight, and then plodded upstairs into the front room, and sat down in the capacious arm-chair before the empty fireplace.

“So they drop off one by one,” he murmured ; “new duties and new lives. So left alone in the world, Teddy, with only yourself to care for !”



B O O K VI.

A HARD TASK.



CHAPTER I.

A WIFE'S ECCENTRICITY.

THE London season was at an end—August had but a few more days to run; the town was empty of its fashionables; there were innumerable vacancies at the clubs; the drives and rides in the park had lost three-fourths of their attractions; West-end tradesfolk were thinking and praying for next season; the Opera-houses were shut; the civil young men at the libraries had less to do, and office clerks were taking holidays.

Mrs. Henwood had gone out of town with the rest of the fashionables—gone away to Scarborough with one maid, in a quiet sort of style that was new to her. Gone away to have her nerves braced, and to try the effect of sea air on the odd thoughts that had been troubling her lately.

Zach and his wife were still in town, and likely to remain there. Zach did not understand the importance of leaving off work and rushing away to waste his time—and what was of more consequence, his money—for one-sixth of the whole year at a watering-place. He preferred to keep

on working ; he found his pleasure at the wharves ; he was becoming rich and putting by money every year ; all his excitement was in London, and excitement did him good and kept him energetic. It was like a spell upon him, this incessant application to his business ; it astonished Mr. Tinchester ; it was nearly the death of the clerks, whom he expected to work with the same amount of vigour. Time enough for rest when he was an older man, thought Zach ; he was young and strong, and before him was a harvest to reap—whilst the sun shone let him gather into his barns. He was not looking well, his friends—that is, his business acquaintances—told him ; there was no flesh on his bones ; his face was thinner, if more delicate than ever in its peculiar handsomeness ; his eyes were of an unnatural brightness, full of the fire of money-getting ; his hands one could almost see through. He laughed when he was recommended change ; he had not time for change, he said ; he felt well and strong enough, and he could not afford to lose a day in pursuit of a pleasure which, apart from business, he felt that he should not obtain. He had a motive, too, for remaining in London—more than one motive—but he was a quiet man, and kept his motives to himself. Not even his wife, from whom he should have had no secrets—and yet who had a secret from him, the reader is aware—guessed for an in-

stant the hidden motives of the man whom she had married for love.

Lettice might have left town with her mother if she had wished, but she preferred to remain at home in her villa on Stamford Hill to going away without Zach. Not that she was intensely happy with Zach Fernwell, alias Henwood, but she was his wife, and she had seen the change in him as well as other people had. She was not happy, we repeat ; she loved him well enough—better than he deserved, possibly—but there had come to her an inner consciousness that he had never loved her, that after all, and despite all protestations, it was only the money ! She kept this secret to herself ; it would not do, she thought, to own that the mother had been right in her past opposition, and read Zach's character better than she had ; she would never own that her judgment had been so much at fault, for she was a proud and obstinate woman.

In the last days of August, late at night at her villa, sitting alone there—sitting up for Zach —hers was not a face expressive of much happiness at home. She had been writing till ten o'clock—writing that book which was her distraction to write, and which it distracted Zach in another fashion to see her write, he detested authorship and authoresses so much. He knew but little of books, save account books, and he had

never read a novel in his life—altogether, a despicable character, the reader perceives !

After ten had struck, Lettice had sat patiently till eleven—then till twelve impatiently, losing her temper somewhat, as was natural with a young wife, whom her husband had not informed of any late “intentions.” At half-past twelve more nervous than irritable, and at one inclined to put her bonnet on, walk down to the gate, and look towards London. She had dismissed the servants to their rooms, and was standing at the window staring out at the dark roadway, when Zach arrived in a cab, paid the cabman, after considerable haggling about the fare, and advanced up the long walk to the door of his house. He admitted himself into his home by means of a latch-key, and came into the front room to start a little at his white-faced wife awaiting him there. He had been too full of thought to notice her at the lighted window, and her sudden presence certainly scared him, and as certainly disturbed his equanimity.

“ What is the good of sitting up till this hour, Lettice ? ” he said, sharply.

“ You did not say that you were likely to be late to-night.”

“ I am always likely to be late,” he answered, flinging himself wearily into a chair ; “ my time is not my own, and is uncertain with me.”

“Yes,” answered Lettice.

He looked very tired, and as he half-closed his eyes to rest them from the strain of the day, Lettice shivered—he looked so like a man who might die suddenly in that chair, worn out with money-hunting.

“I would not sleep there, Zach,” she said, after a pause—“you will be better in bed, if you are tired.”

“I should have come straight to bed if you had not been sitting up.”

“You will go to sleep, and wake unrefreshed.”

“I am not thinking of sleep.”

“What are you thinking about, then?” asked Lettice, almost angrily—“why come home night after night like this?”

“Why sit up to watch for me, if I give you any concern? You are not well—you need rest yourself.”

“If you would only keep the business to itself, and not bring it home with you,” said Lettice, “I should be a happier woman! Oh! Zach, you were not always like this—you were more like other men.”

The entreaty softened him, and he rose from his chair, and kissed her. After all, he loved her in his fashion.

“I'll do my best presently, Lettice. A little more labour now, and we shall retire early from

business, and be rich folk, you and I. Thank your stars, girl, that you have an industrious husband."

They repaired to their room, good friends, it may be said. Lettice was tired, and went to sleep at once—Zach was restless, and could not sleep. That inability to sleep aggravated Zach very much; night after night he cursed his active brain that would not let him close his eyes when he had the *time to spare!* It had been like this two or three months now, and he had been almost inclined to ask a doctor what ailed him; and then a firm belief in nothing ailing him saved him a doctor's bill, and frivolous advice to take care of himself, and try change. Take care of himself!—he did not require caution in that respect; if he esteemed anyone in the world before Zach Fernwell, why, write him down an idiot. Try change!—he had tried more change than he cared to confess. He fought hard for sleep that night, and failed. Failing utterly, he thought of to-morrow's business, to-morrow's profit and loss, of his father, his brother Teddy, the tragedy at Henwood's Wharf, and his wife. His wife, whom he looked at in her sleep, and who, he thought, would be more happy when her child was born. She would not trouble herself so much about him then, he hoped, and distress him so often with her interest. He did not fall asleep till five in the morning; at

seven o'clock he was astir again, protesting to his wife that he had had a good night; at eight he was on his road to London; before nine he was in his city offices; at half-past nine a messenger arrived in breathless haste to tell him that his wife wanted him back—that the doctor and nurse had been sent for, and that she was nervous, and desired him in the house.

Zach went home somewhat unwillingly; he did not see of what use he could be, but he went back notwithstanding, and an hour later the nurse put a red-faced, hook-nosed amalgamation into his arms, and told him that the baby was very like its father. Zach thought that it was very like a rabbit, and was glad when the nurse had taken it away from him, and relieved him from an awkward and unnatural position. He was glad, however, that it was all over, and that mother and child were doing well; he should get back to business in the afternoon for an hour or two, probably; he went up to see his wife, and to offer his congratulations, and to wonder if the broad and baggy woman in attendance called him Mr. Henry Wooden from sheer impudence or ignorance. He was thinking of returning to business, and was in the drawing-room putting on his gloves, when the nurse came running down to ask him to send for the doctor again, as Mrs. Henry Wooden wasn't half so well.

The doctor was procured, and Zach waited very impatiently for his verdict on the case. He sent up at last to ask what had happened, and went upstairs himself and listened at the door. He heard his wife's voice imploring that the doctor or nurse would send for her husband directly ; she was sure that she was going to die ; it was no use telling her that all was well, and she would speedily recover ; that it was nothing but nervousness, for she knew better. She must see her husband—there was a heavy weight upon her soul, and she must ask his forgiveness, and tell him how she had conspired against him and his family. The doctor failing to pacify her, and dreading her nervous excitement, gave orders for Zach, and Zach appeared before the nurse had reached the door.

“Zach, dear, you will forgive me ?” she cried. “I think that I am going to die—and you *will* forgive me ?”

“Yes—yes, whatever it is—my free forgiveness!”

“Send them away,” she whispered ; and the doctor and nurse, both full of curiosity—ready to burst with it, in fact—went out of the room, and waited on the landing, the doctor looking at the nurse's mob cap by way of an object of interest, the nurse counting the doctor's waistcoat buttons, and thinking what a heap there was of them.

“Zach, I haven't been happy, for I have been guilty of a great crime. I did not think of it till

I heard that your brother was honest and poor. I thought only of you—and I secured your interests, and then destroyed the deed of gift."

"My brother!—the deed!—what deed, Lettice?"

She did not answer. She closed her eyes, and gave a long sigh. Zach knew the instant afterwards that she had fainted, and the doctor and nurse, upon being summoned, had all their work before them to bring her back to life. The doctor would have no more confessions; he assured Zach that it was all an undue excitement of the brain, which would compose itself after a draught that he would send. Zach went downstairs to consider if his wife were mad, or if there were any method in her madness!

All that day, apart from business, he thought of this; all the next, when Lettice saw him again, and spoke not of her mysterious words; all the third day, when he asked her if she remembered what she had said to him, and she shuddered, and said "Yes," begging that he would not speak again concerning it, until she was well and strong. There had been something real in it, after all, he thought—it was not the distorted imagination of an excited woman; would she tell him when she was strong again, or once again deceive him? He had never believed that she was deceitful—he was glad of it, he fancied, at times, for now the deceit was not all on one

side, and all the virtues on another. He would wait as patiently as possible for the explanation.

But he found that patience was not one of his virtues ; there was a probability of Mrs. Henwood coming to town to see her daughter, and he rightly or wrongly allied his mother-in-law with the secret, and feared that an influence for harm might be exercised by Mrs. Henwood upon Lettice. He did not wait patiently ; he began to work for himself, to turn over his wife's papers, her pages of manuscript, and her letters—he must find out who had been wronged, what necessity there had been to destroy a deed, and in what strange manner his brother was mixed up with the mystery.

Here might come to his hand a grand chance to add to his own fortunes, and to raise his brother to a higher sphere. Of his own fortunes he would consider in the first place—that was natural—but after that, if he could help Teddy without harm to himself, he would do it. There came wild spasmodic fits of remorse concerning that brother occasionally ; he knew that he had not treated him well—that he had been afraid of him, and afterwards almost ashamed of him—and across the vista at which he looked back now and then, he saw that brother's struggles for him. It pleased him to think that he might be of help to Teddy ; meanwhile let him set his wits to work—those wits which had never failed him, and of which he was vain—to sift the mystery to the bottom.

CHAPTER II.

TEDDY FINDS HIS FATHER.

TEddy Fernwell found it lonely in Upper Ground Street after the departure of his last friend. He felt more apart from all true friends after that—set apart by a barrier which there was no surmounting.

He could not go to Griffin Street till Christie was married; and there being no talk of Christie's marriage—what had become of Mr. Ubbs, he wondered!—he must rest content with his loneliness.

Teddy had a very poor opinion of himself just then; he was still interested in his father's whereabouts, and intensely anxious to find that father, and this interest and anxiety made him feel that he was a traitor to the Wynn cause. He knew that much of Martin Wynn's new and hard manner was attributable to the watchman's death at Henwood's Wharf—that Martin's pride had always objected to his father holding ignoble service there—and now the father dying in that service, and dying in that cruel way, had cast a gloom

upon the marqueterie worker, that was not likely yet awhile to know much diminution. Teddy felt that Martin Wynn was keeping something back—a suspicion of the truth, perhaps—and he feared, even, that the shrewdness of his friend might first discover Richard Fernwell. It did not seem possible, Teddy thought, that Martin should have entirely forgotten the existence of the man who planned ten years ago the robbery of that very place where poor Charles Wynn met death. He distrusted Martin's studied avoidance of the subject, and he felt—he could scarcely assign a reason for it then—opposed to his old master. He had loved the watchman very much, and he had never loved his own father; but still there came to him, as there had come to Zach for different reasons, perhaps, a strange desire to be of service to the wretch who had taught him so surely everything that was evil in his youth, that it was only by a miracle he had escaped.

And in the midst of all this uncertainty there shimmered a faint hope that his father had not done the deed, and that it would be good and grateful news to hear it from his lips. Whilst the mystery hung before it all, he could not face the Wynns with a free heart. Only last week he and Martin met at the old man's grave by accident, and Martin thanked him for the good feeling that had brought him there, and he found that he

could scarcely answer him. There again, too, Martin had asked him to come to Griffin Street, where they were all very dull, and all missed him very much ; and Teddy had shaken his head, and muttered once more that it was impossible. They scarcely parted friends—not old and dear friends, as it was Teddy's pride to think they were—for Martin had gone away vexed at this obduracy, and scarcely able to attribute Teddy's firmness entirely to his love for Christie. And Martin was right. Before that love-confession was the lie which had ever kept Teddy in sore humility for his brother's sake ; after it remained the mystery of Charles Wynn's death, and he could not meet the Wynns any more—not one of them—until he knew the worst, or best.

But it was very lonely in Upper Ground Street. He had that front room to himself now, and only his imagination could people it with those whom he had loved. It was a home to him to some extent ; he was glad that he had clung to it after Polly had gone away.

He was sitting there one Sunday evening, thinking of the old faces that had made this home to him. Polly had been away a month ; it was verging on October, and a few wet days last week had left Upper Ground Street in its usual state of "slushiness"—a state that would last all winter now. Teddy had been to church in the morning, after his usual custom, but the

prayers and the sermon had not done him any good, he thought ; he had been wandering about the old haunts four days last week, and the scenes and characters that he had met there would not flit away from his mind, let him try never so hard. They scared him with their hideousness ; there was no temptation in them—nothing but horror—but they oppressed him very much, and they would not go away from him when he was back again in that house. He was thinking of them again that night, when some one knocked at his door as he brooded there in the twilight.

“ Come in !” cried Teddy.

“ Oh ! I thought that you were at church, Mr. Fernwell,” said the wife of the printer still living in the parlours, “ and I told him so, but I said I’d come up and see, although I knocked three knocks below.”

“ I did not hear them, or I should have come down, of course. Am I wanted, then ?”

“ There’s a queer looking person wants to see you,” said she ; “ I’d be careful, Mister Fernwell, for there’s such lots of tricks about now.”

“ An old man somewhat—is he ?” asked Teddy eagerly.

“ No—a sickly man, about thirty-five or forty.”

“ Well, I needn’t be afraid of a sickly man, Mrs. Parks,” said Teddy ; “ tell him to come up.”

Was this a mistake ?—or was the truth approach-

ing to him? He was still in doubt, when the man entered the room without any warning, and very coolly locked the door behind him. A sickly man, certainly—a green-faced man, with long horsehair locks hanging about his head, with a tattered frock coat, buttoned or sewed up to his chin, and with a pair of skeleton-like hands protruding from his greasy coat-cuffs. A man whom Teddy had not seen before, but whose manners and habits of life were patent to Teddy at once—he was well-up in this class again!

“I beg your pardon,” he said, with a blandness of demeanour that Teddy might have smiled at on another occasion; “but it’s necessary to keep people out whilst we have a little palaver together. My name is Banks—may I sit down?”

“Yes—sit down,” said Teddy; “what is it that you want with me?”

“I’m a man to whom twenty-five pounds is an object—a serious consideration, sir,” said he; “and being a man of few words, I come to the purpose at once. I propose, sir, that we go shares in the reward.”

“In the reward?—go on—reward for what?”

“For the apprehension *and* conviction of the murderers of Charles Wynn. I can lay my hand on two of them—your father and the other fellow!”

Teddy’s right hand gripped his left wrist as in a

vice, but he betrayed no excitement at the man's assertion. It was necessary to be cool and on his guard.

"Why don't you take all the reward, then?" said Teddy; "I am in the dark as to your motives."

"I can't appear; there's a case—a very unpleasant case—against me in the City, and I'm being inquired for. But you are looking for Richard Fernwell?—you have asked for him?—and are on the scent?"

"I wish to find him, certainly."

"He's not the man that did it, but——"

"Thank God!" cried Teddy, leaping to his feet; "I'm glad of that!—I've prayed for that! This is good news you've brought me, man—it makes my heart light again—where is he?"

"But you want the reward—to get the old chap out of the way of the family——"

"I wish to see my father—that's all," said Teddy; "I'm anxious to hear the whole truth—very anxious now!"

"We couldn't make out your game exactly," muttered his companion; "any more than the games of Mr. Wynn, and another cove—your brother—all on the dodge after him—playing the artful like. I've come to you, but blest if I make you out—is it the money?—and will you share fair?"

Teddy thought for an instant as to the best course to pursue. He believed that his visitor was no spy, but had been sent to test his motives, to ask for help perhaps. He read the man quickly enough—for the man was a thief and a vagabond.

“I wish to screen my father,” said Teddy; “and to be of assistance to him.”

“Not to give him and his pal up?”

“No. He is my father, and that is not my duty. He did not kill Charles Wynn, you say?”

“Strike me—no. He never had the pluck in him for that. Well, then, he sends me here to ask if he can trust you?”

“He can.”

“And if you can trust him with a pound or two,” added Mr. Banks; “for it’s devilish hard up, he is. Clean floored is old Dickey at last—poor old fox, it upsets the kit of us, to see him down so low. There wasn’t an artfuller bloke amongst us when he was younger. Like many clever ones, sir, he didn’t make many lucky hits—but the ability was in him, sir.”

“I wish to see him at once.”

“Ah!—that’s another question,” said the man; “we don’t know how that will answer.”

“He will trust me?”

“He’s half inclined—more than half,” replied Mr. Banks; “for he’s hard pushed, you see. He has been killed for want of attention, nearly.”

“Is he ill?”

“I should rather think he was. He met with an accident—but you'll know all about that when you see him next week.”

“I will come with you to-night.”

“Can't be done. He won't do anything in a hurry—if you'll send the money——”

“I will take him ten pounds—but I will send him nothing.”

“'Pon my soul, I'm sure he may trust you!” exclaimed Mr. Banks; “you never were like that other little sneak—and never split on anybody when you were one of us. You'll come back to us again, for you're of the right sort—I've heard lots of stories about Teddy Fernwell.”

Teddy shuddered.

“Let's go at once,” he said.

“I'm with you.”

They went out of the house together, and along Upper Ground Street to the steps in the Waterloo Road arches. It was dark now, and the contrast between them was not readily apparent.

“This is handy for the old quarters, Teddy,” said Mr. Banks, suddenly becoming familiar.

“What old quarters?—where are we going?”

“Drag's Court, Seven Dials—you *have* heard of that charming retreat for poor folk in destitute circumstances?”

“Yes.”

“ You were there a little while ago, inquiring for old foxy ?”

“ He was there, then—after all ?”

“ Oh ! yes—and a terrible fright you gave him—I don’t know why ; but he’s been all along a little afraid of you—never inclined to look you up as you grew older and bigger like he did his son Zach. Lord ! how he hates Zach, to be sure !”

Teddy did not answer, and the two went on together over Waterloo Bridge, up Wellington Street, and then through the streets at the back of Covent Garden Market, until they emerged upon the darker and denser locality of Seven Dials—very full of company that autumn night, and looking to Teddy more like home than ever.

Before Drag’s Court at last—the refuge, and last hiding-place for thieves out of luck—a West-end Alsatia, where thieves were true to one another, and helped one another, if the reward were not too high to shake their principles.

“ Wait here—you can’t come on at once,” said Mr. Banks, “ it’s not the rule.”

“ I may be trusted.”

“ I think so—but you’re not expected.”

“ I bring money—I come in good faith.”

“ All right. Money we want, too. One minute, Teddy.”

Mr. Banks disappeared, and Teddy took up his position with his back to the wall of the court,

as he had stood, he remembered at once, waiting for the Martin Wynn that did not come to him one night as he had promised. Back again to the old life in one step ; the place unchanged, the same faces in the murky street into which Drag's Court led ; the same figures of crime, drunkenness, and want flitting to and fro in the darkness ; the same noises in his ears from the rows of dens down that narrow causeway wherein Mr. Banks had disappeared ; the same scholars in the Devil's school, boys like him and Zach, with never a chance to come to them, poor fellows ! running in and out of the court, looking for father or mother, or the pals that had not turned up that evening. Had he really outlived all this, thought Teddy, or was he back again for good ? Was he part of the Cimmerian darkness that seemed to enwrap this place and its denizens, and after all his strugglings was he to be drawn back into the vortex by a power that it was beyond him to withstand ? He felt that he was in his true sphere ; and yet, thank God ! he felt strong and brave to fight against it. It depressed his spirits, for it surrounded him with his evil past, and assured him how immeasurably inferior he was to her he loved ; but it was not likely that there could ensue any temptation from it, and there was a faint hope stealing to him that he might be, in his own way, a minister for good here. He prayed he might ;

long and intensely he prayed that it might be in his power, before he died, to do some little good in this place. And with that prayer he became the same stout-hearted man that Martin Wynn had made him, and that Martin Wynn was.

A hand touched his arm, and brought him to the present.

“He will see you, Teddy,” whispered Mr. Banks.

Teddy followed that gentleman to a house on the left, the door of which was standing open—the door of the old house wherein he had had the fever.

“Not here—surely not here!”

“Yes. This is the crib.”

“How strange!” murmured Teddy.

It was the same cellar, too, to which they descended step by step. Here Teddy had nearly died of fever when he was fifteen years of age, and here he found his father. It was like a retribution on the man who had worked nothing but evil in his mis-spent life—both thought of their last meeting, in that very den, when they came face to face together there.

CHAPTER III.

MR. FERNWELL'S TRIBULATION.

MR. RICHARD FERNWELL'S position differed from that of his son's ten years ago, inasmuch as Mr. Fernwell was lying in the corner nearest to the small fire-grate, and lying on a mattress supported by a rusty iron bedstead. The difference was in Mr. Fernwell's favour, though that gentleman certainly looked none the happier for it.

Mr. Fernwell looked not happy, or even contented, in his new estate; he was reduced very low, his philosophy was out of gear, and rendered his position scarcely bearable. Had thirty years intervened since their last meeting in Drag's Court, he could not have looked more old or more repulsive, with an age which contained within itself no elements of respect. It was a face of crime; haggard and repulsive in its set expression always, and now rendered worse by its mask of dirt, its unshaven chin and cheeks, its evidence of a suffering that it bore ill, that it represented as one more stroke of bad luck fallen to its

owner's share. Thoroughly cast on an inhospitable shore was this man-wreck; broken up for ever, and incapable of further harm to his fellow-men.

He glared at his son from under his long shaggy eyebrows, and then reached forth with difficulty an arm attenuated by disease.

"After all these years, to meet with you again—and to meet in this place! Are you too proud to shake hands with me, as Zach is?"

"No," said Teddy, taking his father's hand for a moment. "Why should I be too proud?"

"Mother's blood in you, I suppose," said Fernwell. "Well, you haven't come to look upon me as a curiosity, or to give me up? You've brought some money, or some drink—and that's like a good Samaritan."

"I have come to hear your story—to know all the truth."

"Curse it!—then it *is* out of curiosity?"

"Out of charity, say, father," said Teddy. "Here in this place you tempted me for the last time to evil—here in this place let me tempt you to good!"

"Why, that Martin Wynn has never brought you up to devil-dodging, surely," exclaimed Mr. Fernwell. "You're not in the pious line?"

"I wish I could say 'Yes.'"

"It's—it's a good joke," croaked Mr. Fernwell, feebly. "Here, Banks, hold the light to the

young beggar, and let us make sure that this is the immortal Teddy."

Mr. Banks took the light from the table, and was holding it close to Teddy's face, when Teddy somewhat unceremoniously resented the rudeness by knocking it out of his hand.

"I have not come to jest about my past or yours," he said. "I have outlived all jesting."

"And are looking at life seriously—well, I never could," answered his father, "and I never shall. Can't you find the candle, Banks?"

"I've got it," grumbled Banks, from a quadrupedal position on the earthen floor. "There was no occasion to knock it about and waste it—or ride rusty either. Cuss rusty people!"

"That fellow can leave us," said Teddy.

"You said you'd stand ten pounds—where's the money?" said Banks.

"Give him half the money, Teddy," said Mr. Fernwell, "and hand over the other half. He has been a good friend to me—I should have died without him. Bully Banks has nursed me back to life."

Teddy divided the money as his father requested. Mr. Banks immediately disappeared with his share, and Mr. Fernwell placed his under the pillow with difficulty. Mr. Banks had relighted the candle before departure, and its feeble flame, added to the flickering of a handful

of coals in the grate, brought father and son into relief. But the place was damp, and light fought hard to live therein.

Mr. Fernwell gazed at his son intently for awhile.

"You have altered very much," he said. "You've grown a big fellow, whilst he has withered and shrunk up—the devil!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"That wretch of a brother!—that unnatural and crafty hound, whom I wished that I had strangled in his cradle! That—oh!" he groaned, "I'm too weak to swear now. I've lost—every—bit of comfort!"

He lay and groaned again, fighting meanwhile for his breath—finding his voice suddenly, to shout forth—

"But I'm not going to die—I won't die to please anybody! I'll live to be a curse to everybody yet—knocked about and cut up as I am. See if I don't!"

"I shall never see you," said Teddy.

"And if it hadn't been for you—yes, if it hadn't been for you riding the high horse, and coming the bounce ten years ago—it wouldn't have all turned out like this. We had a chance then, the three of us—and we might have stuck together all our lives, and made no end of money."

"I have not watched for you to hear this," said

Teddy, sternly ; "and I will not hear it now from a man like you—from the man whom I call my father."

"An ungrateful whelp like your brother, you are," muttered Fernwell.

"I cannot be grateful for my past—it has stood between me and all laudable ambitions. You do not expect any gratitude from me for your efforts to sink me utterly ?"

"I would have made a hero of you, Teddy," said Mr. Fernwell, in milder accents.

He could not afford to quarrel with Teddy Fernwell ; he saw a future friend in this new, strange son—this son of whom he had been afraid, and from whom he had held aloof. It might be well to humour Teddy's "serious moods;" Teddy seemed to have money, and, for reasons not fairly explained yet, to be interested in him.

"I would have made a hero of you," he repeated. "You were bad enough—too bad, I thought, ever to become an honest man, and it was possible—very possible—to shine in that sphere to which you properly belonged. But all that is past and gone—and if it be any pleasure to you, why, I am glad, Teddy, now, that you escaped me."

"You say that from the heart ?" asked Teddy.

"I do. Upon my soul, I do !"

"I will be your friend, then," said Teddy, "if I can—if you had no hand in Charles Wynn's death.

Tell me that, and rely upon me for any help you may require."

"Wish I may die, Teddy—here a dog's death in this iron crib, a gallows sight too short for me, if I touched the old fellow that night."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, if you must know, Banks did it!"

Teddy, who had taken a chair by the fireside, started up at this with the intention of pursuing Banks at once, and delivering him over to the offended majesty of the law—avenging thus the death of his old friend. His father's next words arrested further progress.

"Not intentionally—all an accident, that no man ought to swing for," said Fernwell; "sit down, and I'll tell you as much as I can before the doctor comes. As for Banks, he only wanted five pounds to get clean out of the country, and you and I will never set eyes on him again. As good a fellow as ever breathed, is Banks—many's the bit of business we've done together in our day, hanging together to the last, in good luck and bad. I wish the world was all Banks—I shouldn't be lying here at death's door. Not at death's door," he corrected, "for I'm getting on again—I only want port wine, and calves-foot jelly, and those sorts of things, to feel more like the man I was. I'll live—I'll live you all out yet!"

Teddy looked more intently at his father—

inclined his head towards him to look more closely into his face.

“ You have been drinking ?” he said at last.

“ I’ve had a stimulant—I am forced to have stimulants, or double up altogether. Do you think a man can have a leg off without a stimulant afterwards ? Try it yourself, and be——”

“ What doctor attends you ?” asked Teddy.

“ Oh ! a clever fellow, and one of us. We’ve the pick of all professions amongst us, and he’s as ’cute a fellow as ever walked the hospitals, and then took to thieving instead of poisoning. Lucky for me that he was clever, for we could not call in the respectable lot, and I had to chance it. It has all been done on the quiet—I’ve been cut up on the quiet like butcher’s meat—I shall never forget it till my dying day, Teddy—it was horrible !”

He drew the back of his dirty hand across his eyes ; his feelings were touched at his own misfortunes, or the brandy which he had taken a few minutes before Teddy’s arrival was exercising its effect more.

“ I have been looking for you to hear the story of that robbery—I ask for my satisfaction, hereafter for your own, to tell me all the truth. If in any way I detect you in a lie, I have done with you. I will go away, and let you die here without hope. You hear me ?”

“ I’m not going to die—I’ve got over the worst

of it. Don't say anything about my dying, Teddy. Everybody says I'm looking better."

"Go on."

"This is how it happened, then," said' Richard Fernwell; "I don't mind the truth, because it don't hurt me a bit. If I had had my wits about me, and the use of my limbs, by all that's holy, I should have been fifty pounds a richer man."

"By informing against Banks?" said Teddy.

"Banks is nothing to me," he said, rescinding his former verdict on that gentleman; "he was always a cowardly sneak, and he kept with me because he could not get anywhere else without being pounced upon, and because—ha! ha!—he didn't like me out of his sight. Oh! a nice fellow, Banks!" he cried, ironically; "he told me if I said a word to anyone about the wharf, he'd jump the life out of me as I lay here. Ah! and he would, too!"

"He came to me—for what reason?"

"For five pounds to help him on—for information, too, and to find out your game. You won't see him any more now, I'll wager!"

"Go on with this story."

Teddy dropped into the chair again, and waited for his father's narrative. After that story would follow his own, and he believed—for he was sanguine in this matter—that it would rouse his father's feelings, and afford him hope of that

facts, and not his father's moral reflections upon them, and he had forgotten his father's late rebuke.

"If you keep saying 'Go on,' when I'm going on, I won't say another word," he cried; "I can't be brow-beaten like this. I haven't strength enough to stand it. We got into the wharf—we slipped into the counting-house—we looked about us, and tried the iron-safe—I don't think that there ever was a genius for safes like Banks—and we were jogging on well, and with a chance of a good haul, when old Wynn came on duty."

Mr. Fernwell sighed, and Teddy became more interested.

"We had to stop work, whilst he was fresh on his beat," said Mr. Fernwell; "but we thought we knew all about watchmen, and that he would go to sleep in a corner somewhere as soon as he could, just as they all do, and that nothing would wake him in a hurry. So I watched him through the window, and when he was out of hearing by the water there, Banks went on with his work—and when he came back, Banks stopped—the drill went beautifully, Teddy, and the safe might as well have been of paste-board. Banks prefers the drill to the wrench, because it makes less noise—that was his fancy, and it spoiled us altogether. That and the infernal dog!"

Teddy did not ask his father to go on again;

and after awhile, Mr. Fernwell concluded his narrative.

“Old Wynn sat himself down on that stone under the archway in Ground Street, and went to sleep, we thought, and as we expected. Upon my word, Teddy, the old beggar was only reading out of a prayer-book by the light of his lantern, and that kept him quiet. He was alive at the first noise—he and his dog together, and it was all up. We were in a fix, but we had to run for it; he was coming straight to the counting-house, bold as brass, when we ran out, and he caught hold of Banks’s shoulder with one hand, and tried to draw the rattle from his pocket with the other. Then Banks got away and pushed him back, and he fell with his head on the stones, and never moved again—the fall killed him, not Banks. It was his own fault interfering—people will interfere.”

“Silence!” cried Teddy, fiercely; “that man was really my father—a man who loved me, and rejoiced to see me honest. Well for you in this hour that you did not strike him down. I think that I should have had the courage to hang you!”

“You were always so violent,” said Mr. Fernwell, with a look of affright at his son; “that’s why we never got on well together, and I thought that it wasn’t worth while ever calling upon you with my respects. I was sorry for the old man’s death—it took away every bit of thought of what

I was doing, so you may guess what a fool it made me. What the devil do you think I did?"

"I know not—I care not."

"I forgot all about the tide having gone out of the dock, and jumped for the water that wasn't there, by Gord! I went down fourteen feet into the dry dock, and broke in half at the bottom—was there ever a man so unlucky as I am?"

"And your accomplice?"

"He dragged or carried me along to our own boat, and rowed off with me to Whitehall Stairs, where a friend was waiting with a cab, just as we'd arranged, in case the swag was heavy. And I got to Drag's Court somehow—the devil knows how, I don't! And here I've been ever since—operated upon, at last, because they frightened me, the brutes. I'll never believe that leg ought to have come off!" cried Fernwell, becoming furious again; "Jackson wanted something to practise on and amuse himself with, and it was a fine chance to have a chop at me! I've had the worst of it all, of course—that was natural enough. Shouldn't be surprised if they don't find me out and lag me, as a wind-up, now Banks has gone. Who's there?" he said, in a shrill voice of alarm; "why don't you come in? There's no knocking required—I've nothing to keep secret here—who is it?"

"It's your doctor, you old fool!" said a rough voice; "I heard that you had company down here."

"Only my son—my respectable son, Mr. Jackson, whose interest in his father's misfortunes has led him to this delightful locality."

"This is Teddy, who left a name for cuteness in Drag's Court," said Mr. Jackson, advancing; "I'm proud to make Teddy's acquaintance."

Mr. Jackson, a burly ruffian, with some fragments of gentility apparent in his black coat and dirty white neckcloth, entered the room, and nodded his head familiarly at Teddy.

"Have you brought some brandy?" cried Fernwell.

"They won't stand any more, Ferny," answered the doctor; "I asked them to club round to-night at the *school*, but the school's in a bad way, and short of funds."

"I've got money—*two* sovereigns, Jackson. Get brandy—get brandy, man, and don't stand looking at me!"

"Can he be moved?" asked Teddy, pointing to his father.

The man put on his medical air immediately, and less resembled the vagabond that he was.

"Certain death to move him an inch."

"I will send some one to see him."

"Some one on whom I can rely," Teddy was about to add, but checked himself. Mr. Fernwell made an effort to start up in bed.

"Don't bring anybody here—Jackson's enough

—I'm better—I don't want anybody to see me. It isn't safe."

"It's no good—what is the use? He can't be getting on better," said Mr. Jackson; "he can't be helped on *his* road more quickly!"

Teddy looked hard at the speaker, but Fernwell laughed.

"The road to health, he means," cried Fernwell. "He has done me a good turn. Jackson, I'm your friend for life."

"Thankee," said Jackson.

"And I'll reward you with brandy—I'll burn my benefactor's bowels up with brandy! Teddy, don't go yet."

"I'll wait till he returns."

Mr. Jackson took one of the sovereigns from his friend's palsied hand, and then left the cellar. Teddy, who had risen, stood and surveyed his father thoughtfully.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Fernwell, tetchily.

"I am thinking if I can be of any use to you—if, with God's help, it is possible."

"You can't make me a saint—even if you're a saint yourself."

"I'm thinking, if you were to live—whether the devotion of my life to your better days would be acceptable? Whether I am not too weak, and you too hard!"

"If I had a comfortable home, and some one to look after me, and care for me, I might, old as I am, change for the better."

Fernwell took his cue too readily, and his artfulness did not deceive the son, whose face lighted not up with the words that the father had spoken.

"And I'm thinking if you were to die here—and go red-handed suddenly to your Maker! Go to-night, father!"

Mr. Fernwell shrank in his bed at his son's vehemence; this was a new son, whom he could not understand. He spoke of horrible and unlikely things; but he spoke with an earnestness that was blood-curdling to an invalid.

"Stash it, *Teddy*!" he said, feebly, "I'm not strong enough to be preached at—and I'm not going off all in a hurry. I shall live years!"

"I will come again—I must see you very often, now."

"As often as *you* like! I bear you no malice, *Teddy*. Why, you were a good chap to come here."

"I am happier in my heart to-night than I have been for weeks!" said his son.

"Because I've got one leg instead of two, I suppose?" grumbled the variable father. "I don't see anything else to have made you happy here."

"You did not kill that old man—he did not go to his God and charge you, of all men, with so black a deed!"

"No, he can't say that. Banks is in for it—and I'm out of that game, at any rate!"

"Hush!" cried Teddy. "Remember that this scheme for robbing your son was your suggestion, and that you are not innocent. Try and pray for forgiveness for all your wickedness to-night. Let me pray with you?"

"No, no," said Fernwell, with his nervous scream once more, "I don't want any praying here. I have always got on well without it—I don't believe in it. I'm sorry to see the fool they've made of you. I should think that I was going to die in earnest then, and I can't bear such an idea as that, Teddy. So don't pray!"

"I will be here to-morrow night."

"Perhaps I shall be well enough to be moved by that time. If I could get out of this den into a more comfortable home, I should pick up wonderfully, and be able to stump about with a couple of damned crutches. And with you to mind me, why," with a short laugh, that he could not repress, despite his hypocrisy, "we might get to praying in time."

"Foxy Fernwell and his son Teddy taking to prayers together—by George! that's as fine a joke as we've had in Drag's Court lately—though there was a good deal of laughing over the operation," said Mr. Jackson, as he re-entered.

"Oh! don't, there's a good fellow," cried Fern-

well. "Stop your foolery, and give me a glass of brandy."

"I am going now," said Teddy, rising. "I can do no further good here. I will come to-morrow. Think of me, father," he said, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the prostrate thief; "think of me, who lived to regret a wicked life, and to escape from it by earnest efforts, faith, and prayer. Make one effort—just one—before it is too late!"

"I'll make five hundred presently, with you to help me, Teddy. Come to-morrow and take pity on me, lying on this infernal gridiron all day, breathing foul air, and getting well so slowly!"

"I will come."

Teddy departed, and Mr. Jackson set down the brandy-bottle at an unapproachable distance from the invalid, and followed the visitor upstairs. At the door opening into the court, Teddy and he stopped together.

"I am going to ask you for the truth—if you know it. Can he live?" said Teddy.

"Quite impossible."

"He carries death in his face; but I must have further advice, despite him."

"Do as you like—but you couldn't have better than mine," was the conceited answer; "and you may bring the police in, with your interference. I passed my examinations with credit—I am a

M.R.C.S.—I was house-surgeon at —— Hospital for a year and a half, and then women, and race-horses, and the devil!"

"It is easy to sink down," said Teddy. "I am sorry for you—you should have known better, with your chances, education, and position."

"It's odd to hear you," said the other; "but I can't stand it any more than your father could. It won't do here."

"I am not here to preach—I haven't the gift," said Teddy; "and I am only anxious now about my father. How long do you think he will live?"

"Oh!—a week or a fortnight, with the brandy."

"I shall see him alive again. So far as you can tell me, he will be alive to-morrow?"

"Not a doubt of that. He'll die as hard as a badger."

"Keep sober, and devote all the skill you have to him, and I will pay you handsomely. Prepare him, too, to see some one whom I can trust—who need not know the cause of his accident—who will not ask it."

"I'll do my best," said the man, impressed by the promise of reward; "but you'd better be cautious, or you'll hang your own father, mind."

The two men parted—one to descend to the cellar and administer the necessary stimulant to Richard Fernwell, the other to emerge stealthily from Drag's Court like a man whose actions

were to be suspected yet, and on whose caution hung a life, that unworthy as it had ever been, yet seemed to him, in his craving to brighten it, a something more precious than his own.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER SUSPICION.

TEDDY FERNWELL found himself with a giant's task before him, but he set about it like a giant. The obstacles in his way ; the uphill nature of his labours ; the poor return which might await him at the journey's end, were not things to be considered, much less to daunt his energy.

Teddy felt strong to prosecute the task, but he did not know how strong he really was. He never knew his own character thoroughly ; in his intense unselfishness he never stopped to consider it. He was aware that there was little in the world to flinch at, and that he was prepared to meet all misfortunes—he thought only of misfortunes—with a patience that should keep him from sinking. His greatest struggle in life had been to confess to Martin his love for Christie, and then to go away and live apart from those who had been his truest friends. It was a trial ; but he was prepared in the future for trials more severe ; he was waiting for them ; he believed that they would

come. He was waiting for Martin to despise him for the old lie that had placed his brother Zach in Mrs. Henwood's charge; he was sure that he must acknowledge it, and that Martin would pass away from him completely. He felt that already there had come between him and his benefactor a something that was undefinable; and in his new interest for his father, and his desire to keep his father's hiding-place a secret, it seemed—if only seemed, it was sufficient—that he took opposite sides with the son of the man who died on watch at Henwood's. Then again there was to come—he was sure that the day was marked out, and it would face him presently—the loss of Christie's faith in him! *That* would naturally follow Christie's father's want of confidence; he should be alone in the world after that—shut away from them all as though he had a world to himself. He would keep strong, however, for they would be better without him, and he would live as best he might, doing the best in every way that he could. He might grow very hard in due course; but he should never shiver into fragments, to let the world see how weak he had been.

Teddy was thankful that his father had not struck the blow which had resulted in the death of old Charles Wynn. That took a weight from him, and rendered his task more grateful. He forgot everybody and everything for a while

in his intense craving to render Richard Fernwell a better man before he died. With despair before him, he would not despair. He thought that he had been once as impervious to good impressions, and as deaf to good words as his father; and he hoped against hope with the patient whom he believed had not been thrown in his way without a purpose.

It was a great and a lofty plan to work out at the eleventh hour the new life for this sinner. Teddy did not know how it ennobled himself, for, as we have already intimated, he did not study himself very frequently.

His father evinced a certain amount of gratitude for the son's interest, odd, awkward and spasmodic—quenched very speedily by the current of daily events, and disturbed by dark thoughts of his own; but still in his weakness he was not utterly ungrateful, and Teddy flinched not from his task. He obtained a fortnight's leave of absence from Stanley and Burns, in order that he might devote the greater part of his time to his father—in order that no chance might be lost to save him. His persistence fatigued Mr. Fernwell certainly; Teddy saw that, for he was watchful, and he had the good sense to withdraw and go home to Upper Ground Street, in preference to wearying his father by advice to which he would not listen. Teddy, in the course of his study,

seldom attempted to preach ; he took indirect means of touching the heart, and appealing to the conscience of his father ; he would draw him back to a pure train of thought by inducing him to speak of the days in Warwickshire, and before Warwickshire, when the father had a name worth treasuring, and possessed a few friends who believed in him ; but Richard Fernwell would break away from such "maunderings," as he called them, and plead for brandy in exchange for the little Bible which Teddy read now and then to him, and which he allowed, under protest, and scoffed at afterwards.

"It's no good coming that trick, Ted," he said, "it can't do with a fellow who never believed in it, and it's hard work to bear up with you in that character. You'd better go home and get my room ready. When we're comfortable together there—you and I—it may come round in time."

Mr. Fernwell was always looking forward—always putting off the hard task of the present hour. He was getting stronger, he assured everybody who took the trouble to inquire after his health, and he certainly did look forward to "peace and quietness" with his son. Teddy shuddered at the fancy pictures Richard Fernwell drew sometimes—for he knew that his father would never see Upper Ground Street again—and endeavoured to warn him of his state, to tell him in every way

except the plain way—that he must surely die. When his father grew weaker—but remained in mind more obdurate—he told him at last plainly; but Richard Fernwell still maintained his own opinion, and was not to be shaken by dismal prophecies.

“No one can tell how I feel except myself,” he said, “and I feel my strength coming back wonderfully. It’s no use worrying me with a heap of nonsense, or trying to make a fellow miserable, I tell you that I shall live to be a blessing to you. A one-legged blessing, Teddy—rather more of a comfort than an ornament. When will you see about the crutches for us?”

“There will be time enough,” said Teddy.

“The doctor will change his opinion, and recommend me a little walk about the room, and then—where the devil’s the crutches?” grumbled he; “and the first change I make is from this hole. It’s not well ventilated—it keeps a man back—and it’s not safe from the police.”

Mr. Richard Fernwell had one fear—that the police would find him out yet, and do their best to hang him for a crime that he had never committed. Heavens! if he should be hanged—he, as white as the driven snow, too. The evidence would be against him; Banks had taken himself off—many men had suffered for less, and as for his defence, the jury would not care a brass button for it!

Teddy had this fear, too, and it was rendered none the less acute by his father's assertions. He was, therefore, cautious how he went to Drag's Court, how he left it, and whom he took there. He took a physician there, as a forlorn hope—a man to whom he told a little of the truth, and who was touched by Teddy's earnestness—and Mr. Jackson's opinion having been endorsed by a higher authority, there remained no more to do but wait. Richard Fernwell had resented this visit, as had been anticipated; it had done more harm than good also, as Mr. Jackson had prophesied, for Fernwell had blasphemed against every one and everything the remainder of the day, and had to fight hard for his breath the day following.

And the days were numbered, and Teddy noted but a little change for the better, the faintest and the poorest, evidenced by a little rough thankfulness for a son's interest and attention.

When the days were speeding onwards to the end, and Teddy had forgotten everything in his new avocation, and was soul-absorbed in it, he met with Martin Wynn. Teddy saw Martin too late to avoid him, as he would have avoided him at that period, fearing questions to which he could not respond, and distrusting the motives which actuated the inquirer. Teddy was coming by a roundabout way to the Dials that morning, choosing the back streets and the labyrinth of "slums"

in Drury Lane and its vicinity, to a straightforward course down St. Martin's Lane, where the probabilities of being recognized might retard his steps, if not offer a suspicion. And here, in a street of the lowest reputation, where honest folk were seldom to be met with, Teddy encountered Martin Wynn.

Martin came with long strides towards his *ci-devant* pupil, who changed colour more than once. He caught Teddy by the arm, as a policeman might have held him in old times, and Teddy mustered courage to make the best of his case. He felt guilty in Martin's presence, and the nature of the cross-questioning that would be surely put to him filled him with dismay. Was the fear that he had had for so long coming with that wintry-looking morning, and would all be over between them after that day? He thought so by fore-knowledge, and, as the colour died out of his face for the last time, he was prepared for the worst.

"Teddy," said Martin, "I have been looking for you."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I called at your house last week—didn't they tell you?"

"No."

"I called yesterday again—and heard that you were seldom at home now; that you left early and

came back late, sometimes not at all—what is the meaning of all this?"

Teddy did not see his way to a perspicuous answer, and so answered not.

"I think that I have a right to know," Martin urged, "for there is no one in the world, save Christie, in whom I take a greater interest. There, Teddy, I am grieved about you—you bother me—you have changed so much that you are beyond my comprehension. From the day that you left my house, taking offence too readily, I have not understood you."

"I took no offence, sir," said Teddy; "I did my duty by you at the eleventh hour, and—I went away."

"Since then——"

"Since then," interrupted Teddy, "I have not understood myself—that is all."

"You are unsettled. I hope that you are not desperate!"

"I hope not," answered Teddy; "try and think not—try and think the best of me, till I can explain more fully, sir. It will be fair and just."

Teddy had set his back against the wall, and Martin had imitated his example. Both men were looking moodily down at the pavement, rent in many places, and greasy with the mire.

"Would it not be more fair and just to tell me all at once."

“I can’t.”

“You can’t trust me?—what, after all these years, you are the first man to face me with that insult!”

Martin lost his temper somewhat here, for he had been trusted so implicitly, and looked up to so long, that he could not understand the nature of that motive which would keep a truth away from him.

“You are the last man, Martin Wynn, whom I would think of insulting,” said Teddy, calmly; “the first of all the world whom I would trust. It is not want of confidence that keeps me silent.”

“Why should there be a secret between us, if you are as honest as you were in my house?”

“I will ask you to believe that I am,” said Teddy, proudly; “or to condemn your own teaching.”

“Teddy, this is all nonsense—and sheer foolery!” cried Martin; “haven’t I had enough to trouble me lately, without you? My father’s death, and my father’s murderer baffling a justice that demands him, and now you to go wrong, or to wrap yourself up in a paltry mystery that is unworthy of you.”

Teddy might have confessed all, had not Martin spoken of his father’s death, and had not the brow of the speaker contracted very much when he spoke of justice that was still searching for the criminal, and still baffled. His own father, Teddy thought,

had but a day or two to live, and he must die in peace, at any cost—even at the cost of Martin Wynn's respect.

He was silent therefore; the mystery must be kept, and he must remain under suspicion.

“I never thought that you would prove so stubborn,” said Martin; “you have changed very much—you cannot deny it. I don't say that you have gone back to evil—I can't think that, Teddy; but I am sure that you are not the man of whom I had such hopes.”

Teddy felt the tears rise to his eyes, and again the impulse to tell all, and to trust to Martin, came to him. But he restrained it; it was as much as his father's life was worth, and it would not add to Martin's better thoughts of him. He was in direct opposition to the master—and there could not evolve from any explanations a better or a brighter atmosphere, he was assured. In a time not far distant, he could tell this story, and present himself in brighter colours—but not in that hour.

“Trust me!” he could only say again.

“You will not trust me—why expect trust in yourself?” asked Martin.

“Sir—I scarcely expect it.”

“You have left Stanley and Burns?”

“For a little while.”

“Suddenly—and unceremoniously, they tell me,

when they were pressed very much for first-rate hands."

"I was forced to leave."

"Why forced?"

"I—I was compelled to go away for a week or two," said Teddy.

"You are still in London; you are not at home regularly; you were seen some time ago—I saw you—in a neighbourhood as vile as this one; I find you in this place to-day. Teddy, I have but one hope—are you like myself, in search of any one?"

"No."

Teddy's search was over, and he had found his father.

"If you would only acknowledge that you were in the wrong—have the boy's old faith in me—trust in my efforts to make things right—I might be of service to you. But when you shun me, and seek such places as these, I must suspect that you are falling away from good—that in these streets there is advancing to you a temptation that you may not have the power to resist."

"No, sir—there is no temptation before me."

"Are you a better judge of that than I?" said Martin; "you have been weak."

"Weak enough to love Christie, you mean," replied Teddy, colouring; "right, sir, I have been very weak."

“I did not mean that. I did not require any allusion to *her* name from you—I must not have that now.”

Teddy was suspected; he could not even clear away that suspicion by a full confession, and he took the sentence which was implied by Martin Wynn’s words. He *was* prepared for it, and he bore up well. Too well, for Martin saw only hardness of demeanour in his opposition.

“Your actions are dark, and you will not throw a light upon them,” said Martin. “I can but think that you are falling into sin. Sometimes I have an awful thought that you have found your father—that your father might have been once more tempted by the wealth at Henwood’s Wharf—that, my God! he might have killed mine! Teddy, if I thought that you took his part against me—I should curse you!”

Teddy fought hard for firmness now; it was the life of his father, perhaps, for which he fought. He must keep strong, and Martin Wynn was nothing then in the balance. In the good time the story in a different light, not now. He took his father’s part, and he must turn from this man.

“I can bear no more, Mr. Wynn,” said he. “I have not the time, and it suits not my inclination to be condemned yet awhile. I have not always acted fairly by you—there, I own that!—but at least I am not deserving of your curse, and I am

for ever, sir, and for all that you have done to me, intensely grateful."

"I can never trust you again."

"So be it, sir."

"I can never see you again. If you go away like this, hard, unmoved, the man I never expected to find in you, all the doubts that I have fought against for your sake must be strengthened."

"I may not deserve them all, sir; but I shall never be near you to explain them away."

"Deserving of some, then?"

"Yes."

"You own this—and only a few minutes since you asked me to trust you!"

"To trust me in my present step—yes."

"Then—"

"But I can hear no more," cried Teddy. "I am content to live apart from you. Long since I knew that you would lose all hope in me, and I have fought against my better knowledge. There, let me go—think the worst of me," he added, passionately, "but let me go!"

"For the last time," adjured Martin, standing in his way, "I offer you my help to lead you back, to comfort you in this new trouble. Will you take it?"

"I cannot."

"Then I must part with you for ever. From to-day will come never a wish to see or hear from

you again. We go our separate ways in life—we two who trusted in each other—and there's an end to everything between us."

"An end to everything—yes, it has come!" said Teddy. "Well, God bless you for the faith you have had, for it led me right and kept me true! No after, darker thoughts of yours can stand between me and my Saviour!"

Whether Martin heard any of these words or not is doubtful; they were marred by a huskiness of voice, and a rapidity of utterance, and before they were concluded, Teddy had darted into the roadway, and was tearing at a headlong pace down the street. Teddy finished his sentence to himself as he ran away like a madman, leaving Martin Wynn still bewildered on the pavement.

CHAPTER V.

TEDDY IS COMFORTED.

TEDDY found his way to Drag's Court, and was rewarded for all past efforts by a volley of abuse from his estimable parent.

Mr. Fernwell had begun to regard Teddy's presence as a necessity ; to feel uncomfortable in his son's absence, even doubtful of the motive which might detain him, for the father would remain suspicious to the last. When Teddy was keeping him company, he did not doubt the son, only away from him did an ungenerous mind become full of distrust. But Teddy at his side now was to make a different man of him at times, to bring to the surface a gleam or two of a better nature. It was a new thing to be an object of interest ; to be treated kindly ; to hear kind words; to be promised a roof over his head, and a son to study him, should he recover, which he was sure to do, despite all the doleful prophecies that had been hurled at him.

He had been looking forward to an early visit from Teddy that day ; Teddy had promised to

call early and read to him, and Mr. Jackson, on the strength of that promise, had taken a day's leave. Then Teddy had not come so early as he might have done, and Mr. Fernwell having thought hard, and thought himself out of temper, launched his anathemas at his son as he came in from the day-light.

Teddy did not respond at once ; he took a chair by his father's side, and waited patiently till the reproaches were concluded.

“I will tell you what detained me,” he said, at last, “and what I have done for you.”

“Done for me!” growled Fernwell. “Nobody ever did anything for me !”

“I have given up my best friend!—the best friend that a man could have!”

“Who is he ?”

“Martin Wynn.”

“You—you haven't told him anything about me ?”

“No.”

Teddy related his story, and Mr. Fernwell listened with interest, till he found that its details were not exactly after his taste.

“And a good riddance of as meddlesome a beggar as was ever out of the black-coat-and-white-choker business,” said Mr. Fernwell ; “if it hadn't been for him, you and I and Zach might have been in easy circumstances by this time.”

"There, we need not regret that past," interrupted Teddy; "I should not have been here, taking care of you."

"How do you know where you would have been?" growled his father, "and what is the good of talking like this. We're nearly out of brandy, and that's a topic more congenial to my present frame of mind. I'm awfully thirsty, Teddy."

"Presently, you shall have brandy. Keep quiet now."

"I don't want any of that Bible dodge to-day—I won't have it," said Mr. Fernwell quickly, "you should have come at proper hours if you wanted to pitch that stuff at me. I can't have my time wasted like this—I want amusing. Why don't you amuse a fellow when he asks you!"

Teddy shut up his little Bible with a sigh, and returned it to its place near his father's pillow—where it always lay unopened, till Teddy attempted to awaken an interest in its holy lessons.

"I can't amuse you to-day," he said, "my heart's heavy."

"You never are amusing now," complained Mr. Fernwell; "I remember the time when you were more like a kitten than anything else—aggravating enough, but making people die of laughing at your tricks. I never laughed much at them, for I never was fond of laughing, but you might

give us one or two jokes now, instead of one or two texts, and see how they would answer."

"Not to-day," said Teddy wearily.

"Can't you sing something? Great heaven! have you forgotten all those patter songs you were so fast with once? There was a song with a jig to it—a toe and heel jig—why don't you try something in that line?"

"Time, and place, and inclination all against me," said Teddy; "how do you feel to-day?"

"Stronger—stronger, Ted," was the reply, "only infernally thirsty. Can't you make a fellow a little weak brandy and water—or won't you?"

"I will make it at once."

"There's a good fellow," said Mr. Fernwell; "that's what I call filial affection—bless you, Teddy. We shall get on together in time, and understand each other. I look forward to the days in Upper Ground Street—though it's a devilish low neighbourhood, mind you—and the comfort that I shall be to you, keeping house for you whilst you are at business, and getting the pipes and grog ready by the time you come back. What heaps of things we shall have to talk about!—why, my life has been as good as a play, only, of course, it wouldn't have done to relate it before. But now—no secrets from each other."

"My life has been as good as a play too," said

Teddy, passing over the nourishment for which his father had inquired, "a play with a good moral in it."

"Oh ! damn the moral."

"I'll tell you a little of it now—it may amuse you."

"I hope it may, but I am not sanguine. Nice and weak and washy you've made this mixture, Teddy. If I wasn't so thirsty I'd pitch it at you, glass and all!"

"I'm going to tell you how Martin Wynn set about my reformation."

"Go on. I'm all attention."

Mr. Ferrifwell handed back the empty glass, and then curled himself in his bed-clothes, and shut his eyes. In a few minutes he was asleep, but Teddy went on with his narrative, as though it amused himself, or brought with it, thus delivered, some consolation for all that had happened to him that day. He became silent at last, however, and sat looking at his father's ghastly face, fancying that it had altered, and become more sunken since yesterday. He had given up Martin Wynn for that man ; he had repaid Martin's kindness by deceit, and preferred ingratitude to interest. A strange choice, but still his father,—through it all, and before all, a father who, by a miracle, might be brought to a sense of his position, but who seemed impervious to common remedies. A terrible

failure, this mission of his, thought Teddy ; his father harder that day than he had been hitherto—and more defiant. Confident in living many years, and but a few days left him at the best. He prayed that some signs of penitence might ensue before the last, but he doubted as he prayed. This was a man who had gone wrong by choice almost, who had been very vile and treacherous through life, and who would die as he had lived.

He was praying when his father woke, and asked for brandy again ; more than once that day, Teddy silently sitting there, watching the sick man's fitful snatches at sleep, prayed within himself for one chance to do good to this benighted soul. It was in his hands, or no man's. A clergyman would have had no chance here, for he would have been ignorant of the case—only one who knew Richard Fernwell, then, and who had known him at his worst, could expect even a patient hearing, and even he was waiting still in vain.

Teddy remained with his father all day. In the evening Mr. Jackson returned, received money from Teddy, promised to take every care of Mr. Fernwell, "who," he added, "was not looking so bright as he could have wished to see him that day."

"How can I look bright with that fellow wanting to talk me out of my mind about things which he don't understand ?" replied Mr. Fernwell to

this ; "he has been at it all day, Jackson. There, send him off, and let you and me have a game at cribbage till I feel more sleepy. I wonder why I am so wide-awake to-night ?"

"Nerves," said Jackson, laconically.

"And he's been preying on them !—now, that's too bad. I feel all eyes, Jackson—round, staring, fiery eyes, that feel as if they'd never shut again. It's a great nuisance, Jackson—it might tell against me getting better, if it kept on."

"Good night, father—I am going now."

"Oh ! good night to you. Come in a better temper another time, or stop away."

Teddy did not reply. He bade Mr. Jackson good night, and went away to Upper Ground Street. He went away with a gloomy countenance enough, for his heart was heavy. He had lost hope in his task—lost a fair hope and a good friend, both in a day. With every step he took the consciousness of going further and further away from all in whom he was interested, forced itself upon him—the Wynns, Zach, now his own father ! He should soon reach the end of his journey now ; presently he should be at the top of the hill, standing all alone on its summit, with the north-easter dead against him, and a wild stretch of table-land before him. That would be his world for good, where he would have to try the hard task of reconciling himself—to himself !

He opened the street-door with his key, and went upstairs. He never locked his room door ; he placed every confidence in his fellow-lodgers, like a man whose world had been an honest one, with no one to distrust therein. He passed at once into his sitting-room, and then stood aghast and trembling, as well he might stand.

For sitting at the table, waiting for him patiently, as though they had a right to wait, were Christie Wynn and her aunt Polly. The candle-lamp was on the table, and had been burning for two hours there—for two hours these women had waited for the wanderer's return. Teddy was bewildered at the figures sitting there in their dark mourning, and could not reconcile their presence with anything that had happened that day.

Both rose as he entered, and came towards him, impelled by the one thought that had brought them there ; then the younger of the two dropped suddenly behind the other, and Polly came on alone, and put her arms round him in the motherly way that she had done once or twice before in life, when he needed cheering words.

“ I come to say I trust you, Teddy. Whatever it is that turns you from us now, I come to say *I trust you !* ”

Teddy was not proof against this action ; he clasped her tightly in his arms, and kissed her. He remained silent, and breathing hard, strug-

gling with all his might not to give way like a woman.

"God bless you for your trust!" he said, hoarsely—"I will deserve it, Miss Polly, ever after this!"

"We come to say we trust you," corrected Polly, as she left his embrace, and energetically waved her hands to Christie—"we don't give up our woman's faith so easily."

"I thank you very much," murmured Teddy, holding out both hands to Christie, and shaking them in his own; "this makes amends for all that has gone before, or that there is to follow. You have faith in me, then?—*you* believe that I haven't gone wrong?"

"Yes, I believe it," answered Christie, "for it is not like you—you, who have been always strong, unselfish, and gentle."

"Good words—too good for me," said Teddy; "but they make me very happy. *He* knows that you have both come?"

"Yes."

"Sit down, please," entreated Teddy, placing the chairs for his visitors again, taking a chair himself before them, and dropping into it, all eagerness; "he is sorry for the hard words of this morning?—he sends you here, both of you, to say that he withdraws them?"

He turned to Polly Wynn, as though he consti-

tuted her spokeswoman for the occasion ; he knew that he could look her in the face with less embarrassment. But Polly Wynn had a will of her own just then, and a plan of her own for Teddy's comfort ; she turned at once to Christie.

“Christie, it's you to tell him all. You know more of this—he would rather hear you speak, I know.”

Christie blushed at this, even trembled for a moment. Then she took courage, and faced this eccentric lover of hers—faced him with all her beauty, and all that earnestness which added another charm to it.

“Teddy, he does not withdraw them,” she said ; “for he is hurt by your want of confidence in him ; and he believes, against his own good thoughts, that you have altered very much. I—we two women—have taken your part to-night, for we have heard all the story, and we would face you ourselves with one question.”

“He sent you ?”

“No. But he did not ask us to keep away ; he did not seek to thwart those wishes which bring us again to the old home.”

“And the old friend,” added Polly.

“And the old friend, who will not be stern and cold with us.”

“One question,” said Teddy ; “well, what is it ?”

He compressed his lips, and turned very pale.

The past suspicions, the doubts that Martin Wynn had had of him, would all rise up anew, and that day of trouble would never have an end. This was the climax, after all—and then the curtain on the Wynns for ever.

“Only one question, Teddy,” appealed Christie, “that you can answer, looking us in the face, and not down at the floor like that.”

Teddy looked up at once.

“We ask you, then—we who care not about your secrets, women as we are—whether you are a better or worse man than when you lived with us in Griffin Street, or with Aunt Polly and my grandfather? You have altered one way or another, Teddy—you are not the same.”

“It is a strange question to put to me,” said Teddy; “and it is very hard to answer.”

“He says that you are falling away from right. For the first time in my life,” she cried, with excitement, “I say that he is wrong!”

“Thank you, Christie,” murmured Teddy; “spoken like a woman, without a thought of the evil in the world, or without much worldly knowledge.”

“I have a knowledge of your character—that is, I think I have,” she corrected; “and I ask you for a simple answer.”

“With every day a man must become worse, for he is a miserable sinner,” groaned Teddy; “why

should I have become a better man? I cannot answer this—I do not see my way to a clear answer."

Christie sighed; and from the woman near her echoed a faint wail, as if over the hopes that had brought them there. Teddy was roused by their sadness, by the doubts which might be rising here too, for all their past assertions. He was about to speak again, when Christie said,

"Many men and women become more good with every day, and you we hoped would do so with the rest. Oh! Teddy, we had such faith in you—for you were very different to all men, contented, grateful for a little, and anxious—we all saw it—to do good."

"I am trying to do good now. If to set myself aside and live for others is to be a better man than I was months ago—if to strive for another's better life at the expense of my own is not to fall away," cried Teddy, "I am that man, and I ask you—only you, Christie!—to keep your faith in me!"

He did not know that he could speak up for himself until that moment, speak of himself and his good works with so much boldness; he was off his guard, and had perhaps betrayed his secret; but it was the woman he loved who had come to ask him to let her think the best of him still. He could not let her go away with the impression that he was a poor unstable wretch, turned from good

by a temptation that he had not the strength to fight against ! Let Martin Wynn believe that, but not his daughter !

“ There ! *there !* ” cried Christie, clapping her hands, crying, laughing, and clapping her hands again ; “ I told him so, but he *would* keep firm—he,” she added, a little indignantly, “ who should have known you better than we did. We wish to hear no more—we are content—we will go away rejoicing, as over a brother restored to us ! ”

“ Don’t go yet,” said Teddy, suddenly ; “ you may as well hear the worst of me now, and tell your father the worst. I have—I have said too much. I have been to all of you not exactly the man you fancied—I have been penitent, earnest in my efforts to live down an evil past, but I have lived with a lie at my heart, and I could not for my brother’s sake confess a deceit that I had practised on your father. God forgive me, but wrong as it may have been, I do not regret it ! ”

“ What do you mean ? ” gasped Christie.

“ Tell your father to-night, that in my efforts to re-awaken his interest in my brother—to give Zach one chance to rise from darkness—I lied with all my might. Zach, poor fellow, was not worthy of your father’s good words with Mrs. Henwood—he was very, very unworthy—and I tried hard to deceive the man who saved me afterwards.”

“*This*—this when you were a boy?—when you first came to Griffin Street?”

“Yes.”

“But this was in the dark estate from which my dear father saved you. You did not know right from wrong then. This belongs to many years ago, and it will not stand between you and my father now.”

“I never told him. I could not tell him. I degrade my brother now, like a coward, by this avowal.”

“It is never cowardly to acknowledge a fault, Teddy,” said Christie; “and we will not have the darkness of the past back on us. We have had the answer which we came to seek, and we are happy to receive it. We see the end of all this—and it is very bright. You will have courage?”

“I will have courage,” repeated Teddy.

“And patience?”

“Ah! and patience, too,” answered he; “for you do not turn away, and I have told you the worst of me. You bring me back a gleam of sunshine, and it will never desert me after this. If your father doubt me, as he has a right—if you forget me—if I never, never set eyes on you again—and it is more than likely—still the sunshine shall be there, and I will thank God for it!”

“But if the day should come—and it *is* more than likely,” she cried, quoting Teddy’s words,

and adding an emphasis of her own ; "when all the clouds have passed away, and—"

"I will not look forward to the future, Miss Christie," said Teddy ; "I never was much of a castle-builder. Fresh doubts may arise—though if I can keep them down, I will. I will try with all my might," he cried in his old hearty tones, that told of the good which this visit had done him ; "and if I fail, remember that there will ever be some light left with me."

It was left with him at least that night ; when they had gone away, and he was a lonely man again, it shed a radiance in that upstairs room, and added a brightness to his face. It made the present more than bearable—for he had told of his past deceit, and they to whom he had confessed had seen in it but his self-denial. If they were but women—prone to forgive—looking with womanly pity at man's errors, and judging not as men would have judged him—still they were women whom he loved, and one was like an angel to him. She forgave him ; she kept her FAITH in him. Like an angel, also, in being for ever far above his earthly wishes ; he felt the separation between them that night more than ever, and yet he felt more happy !

"It only wanted Christie's faith to give me strength again," he murmured, as though his strength had almost failed him until then, which it

had not. "Nothing new or strange to come and take me from the beaten path!"

The door opened as he spoke, and Teddy turned in his chair and looked towards the door, and at the figure entering with a pale, excited face, that scared him with a something new and strange at once.

"Zach," he said, "what can have brought you to see *me*?"

CHAPTER VI.

MR. FERNWELL CONSIDERS HIMSELF AN INJURED MAN.

“ **W**HAT could have brought you to see me ?” It sounded like a reproach to Zach as he entered, and he accepted it as one, albeit Teddy had only expressed his honest surprise. The last man to honour the home in Upper Ground Street was the man who had risen from the masses, and whose virtues had not expanded with his rapid ascent.

“ Spare me, Teddy,” he said, as he advanced, “ if I have not been the best of brothers. I come to make amends at last.”

“ To make amends ?” quoted Teddy ; “ I don’t think that is needed.”

“ Perhaps to make you rich, old fellow,” he said in a lower tone—“ to raise you with myself.”

“ Very kind of you,” was the dry reply ; “ but I am saving money, as well as paying my way.”

“ But to make you rich,” he said ; “ to give you power to help yourself and your friends ; to place you above the petty wages of the handicraftsman.”

“The honourable wages of the English workman,” corrected his brother. “Well, sit down, Zach. To help myself and friends is not a thing to be despised—teach me to be as fond of money as you are, and in the future you will see how grateful I am.”

“You are satirical. This is not fair—this is unlike you.”

“Pardon me—you are right. It is unlike me; but I am unlike myself to-night. I feel very happy—all the good news is streaming in at once, and the daylight comes up more and more to brighten a man who has been very dull lately. I am glad to see you—sit down.”

Teddy placed a chair for his brother, and then said,

“Sit down, Zach, and make yourself as comfortable as you can.”

“Time is precious with me just now, and this is but a halting-stage on a journey which we will both make together. Teddy, we must find our father.”

Teddy looked hard at Zach, but did not answer.

“You and I must find him,” said Zach, in an eager whisper. “I have been searching for him all the last week, but I have not your knowledge of the streets, and at every turn I am baffled.”

“What do you want with him?”

“To make him rich also.”

"He is past all riches," answered Teddy; "he is dying."

"Ah!—who told you? Have you found him out? Was he connected with that robbery? Did he kill old Charles Wynn? I thought that you knew all, and I came on to you."

"You are to be trusted with your father's life, I suppose?" said Teddy, in not too complimentary a fashion. "It affects your interests, and your name, Zach! Well, I *have* found him out—he was connected with the robbery—he did not kill poor Wynn."

"I must see him at once."

"I don't think that it is necessary," said Teddy, "it may excite him. He is very weak now. He does not speak of you with—any—great degree of kindness."

"I must see him. It is more necessary than ever, for all our interests, that I should see him."

"What is this story, Zach?"

"I will tell you the facts as we proceed. We have been robbed all our lives by the Henwoods—our mother was not disinherited."

Teddy did not betray any great astonishment at this; the news was startling, but he was thinking of his father's weakness, and how Zach's presence would affect his father. The money did not trouble him, but he became possessed with the idea that a meeting between Zach and his father would do good—

that such a meeting, at such a time, would be better for them both. The man who had been at war with the world all his life, might like to die in peace with his children. He began to think, also, that Zach's presence might make an impression upon his father, if Zach concealed his selfishness better than he did at present. He would give him a lesson as they walked to Drag's Court. The days were hastening on, and his father was no better. It was necessary to be decisive in their movements.

"We will go at once," Teddy said.

They left the house, and went along Upper Ground Street together, both somewhat thoughtful. Zach had been taken aback by his brother's demeanour, and was at a loss—with all his shrewdness—to see clearly to the depths of Teddy's character. He had not taken any trouble to understand his brother lately; he had admired him in his heart, and he had felt that Teddy was honest, industrious, and independent; but on that night he was puzzled. He could not understand a nature wholly unselfish—a heart that would not throb with delight at the prospect of worldly advantages. His soul had become so narrowed in pursuit of riches; he had lost so much faith in humanity by his hard bargains, his commissions, his huckstering on the dirty back stairs of commerce, that money had become his god, and he had

given up everything for it—even his own health. He had other faults and failings, poor Zach! but money-worship was the foremost sin, and it brought others in its train, by the natural law of covetousness.

Zach had been inclined, till he had met with Teddy, to think that he was about to play the hero—lifting his brother from the dregs of society, as it were, and placing him nearer to himself. His own interests were Teddy's, certainly; but Teddy should be none the less indebted for all Zach's efforts to bring about their common welfare. To do him justice, he was glad that Teddy's chance had come at last—for the fragments of the boy's wild love clung to him yet, and kept him from becoming wholly despicable. He considered that he had been troubled, bored by those thoughts of Teddy Fernwell, that would intrude upon him even in his golden dreams—but it never struck him that those thoughts had done him any good.

He was not even aware that he felt better in Teddy's society, that he went back many years in thought when he was with him. He was sure that he felt uncomfortable, almost miserable, for days afterwards—that was all.

When they were free of Upper Ground Street, and were crossing Waterloo Bridge towards the Dials, Zach recounted the history of the family chances, drawing for Teddy's edification a glowing

picture of the brother's future. We need not make closer allusion to that history in this place—further on in our chapter it will have to be again sketched forth, and sailing on towards our **FINIS** we have not space for "vain repetitions."

Zach was more surprised than ever at his brother's stolidity; it could not be natural, he thought, only an admirable piece of acting that almost deceived him. He had had no idea till then, that Teddy possessed these powers of self-command. Perhaps this Teddy over-did his coolness, Zach thought also, when the brother laid his hand upon his arm, and said,

"Let me advise you as to the best method of meeting your father. Say as little of the past as you can, and tell your story as briefly as possible. You will be shocked at the change in him."

"Very likely," said Zach. He could be very cool on that topic; he was a man not easily shocked by suffering, at least.

"And if you should not feel too great an interest in him," suggested Teddy, after a moment's hesitation, "feign it for once. Let us on his death-bed spare his feelings as much as possible."

"To be sure," said Zach; "I am not the man to wound his feelings."

They made no further allusion to Mr. Fernwell, Mrs. Henwood, or themselves, after that. They were silent together as they proceeded side by side

through that maze of Drury Lane streets, wherein Teddy earlier that day had encountered Martin Wynn. A day ever memorable for him, crowded with incidents out of the common way, and tending to change him and his life. A day that seemed as though it would never end.

“Eleven o'clock,” said Teddy, as they turned into Drag's Court; “I hope that we shall not disturb him too much.”

“Here!—in this place!” ejaculated Zach; “is it safe?”

“For the Fernwells—quite safe.”

Into the house—the door standing ajar, as usual, for the convenience of numerous lodgers, many of whom were in the habit of coming home in a hurry with *small parcels*—and proceeding by cautious steps down the creaking staircase.

“It's as black as night,” said Zach; “don't go on so fast.”

Teddy Fernwell was already at the door of the room, or cellar, and knocking softly with his knuckles.

“Who's there?” cried Mr. Jackson, from within.

“Teddy.”

Mr. Jackson unlocked the door the moment afterwards, and appeared in his shirt sleeves with a candle in his hands.

“Thundering sick of your governor I'm getting, and no mistake,” he said tetchily—he had been out

all day, and was tired, and not quite sober ; "the old beggar has been fainting now—as if that was any good—and I've had trouble enough for sixty to bring him round again!"

"We will come to-morrow," said Teddy, keeping Zach back with one arm extended behind him.

"Is that you, Teddy?" shouted Mr. Fernwell, in far from a feeble key ; "here, I want you. Come in—come in—and don't mind this fellow's lies ; there's no more sleep for me to-night. I'm all right—I only want amusing till I come round again."

"I bring a friend with me."

"The devil you do ! No friend of mine, at least. Kick him out, Jackson!"

"A friend of yours too," said Teddy ; "my brother Zach."

"Kick him to the uttermost limits of earth!" cried Mr. Fernwell ; "I'll have nothing to do with the scamp ever again!"

"I bring good news," said Zach, quickly ; "independence and a high position for you."

"He's come after the reward!—he thinks I killed old Wynn!—I know what he means by a high position, the scamp!"

Teddy entered the room, followed by Zach. It was the quicker method of pacifying his father.

Mr. Jackson was already attempting it.

"You'll do it in a minute, old man," he asserted ;

“you'll break everything you've got, and off you'll go!”

“You be——”

“Father,” said Teddy, quickly advancing, “I ask you to lie still, and listen patiently to the news that your son has brought. It is strange, but good news. It places us all in a different position from to-night.”

“To think that *he* should bring good news!”

“He brings regrets also for your present state, for much harshness on his side, engendered by much unfairness on your own. He would forget the past,” said Zach.

“Ah! you're up to something that I don't see clearly yet,” he said, softening a little; “you may get over Teddy—for he's a fool in some things—but you will not *do* me!”

“Will you listen to me?”

“It will be a change—it may be amusing,” remarked Mr. Fernwell.

Zach looked hard at Mr. Jackson, who was putting on his coat, and making himself presentable for company. Mr. Jackson looked back at him.

“This is a family matter, sir,” said Zach.

“And you want me to go? Very well—your family's been the curse of my life—and I have had more than enough of it.”

“You've been paid for it, haven't you?” grumbled Mr. Fernwell, “what have *you* got to make a

noise about? Mayn't a man faint if he likes without all this row?"

"Ah! you're a nice man," remarked Mr. Jackson drily; "if you had not been a pal of mine, and you weren't so very hard up just now, I would not have taken care of you. You're the most ungrateful beast I ever met!"

And with this final and complimentary verdict, Mr. Jackson retired.

Zach and Teddy took their seats near Mr. Fernwell's bedside, Zach looking very hard at his father. He had not seen much of sickness or suffering; his life had been cast in pleasant places; he had not looked on death advancing since he was a child, and his mother gave up the ghost at Hennwood's; but he was assured that that face—ghastly and haggard in the candlelight—was the face of a man whose hours were numbered. For an instant a chill fell upon him, and kept him silent; the face daunted him, and the fiery eyes glared wildly and in an unfatherly fashion at him. He might have been more unmanned, had not the importance of his mission there suggested the chances that he might lose if he were not more speedy.

He was about to dash into the subject, when his father stopped him.

"Teddy knows all about this?"

"Yes."

"Then let him tell it," said Fernwell; "I under-

stand him better than you. I have become used to his voice, and yours I do not care to hear."

"We will not bear malice in our hearts," said Teddy; "we sink the past, and meet together here, father and sons."

"Teddy may tell this story, if he likes," said Zach.

"I do not care about it," said Teddy; "tell him yourself, Zach, and be as brief as you can."

Teddy turned his large eyes towards his father, and kept a careful watch upon him. Zach began—

"Our troubles commenced when you were without friends, and had run away with mother. My mother's father died, and left a will, cutting off my mother from all share in those estates for which you married her."

"Plainly put. Well, for which I married her—I grant that."

"He was sorry for his child—and her position with you troubled him very much at last. He had ascertained that you were sinking fast enough from right; and she with you, and we with both of you. He took another resolve, in a mad kind of fashion, to conceal a deed—an important deed—in a secret drawer of a cabinet. The Henwoods are all mad in their way. He told his wife of this document—my grandmother—he left a letter also with it, wherein it was stated that she was to use her judgment concerning the deed of gift; if you had re-

pented ever so little, or if there was a chance for my mother, or for us, it was to be shown—if not, to be destroyed. All this left to the discretion of his wife, who was a woman of the world, and a woman of common sense."

"She never gave me a good word," whined Mr. Fernwell, as though that fact did not bear testimony to her sense, at any rate, "but go on—go on."

"Then my grandmother died first, and Mr. Henwood died soon afterwards, leaving that deed intact, in the cabinet."

"Eh!—and it exists—and what is in it? Teddy, I—I—I think I'll have some brandy, and not so much water with it this time."

Teddy hastened to provide the stimulant; it was necessary on this occasion. Mr. Fernwell was unduly excited; his hands were clutching the counterpane, which he drew up to his bristly chin; his shaggy eyebrows were working up and down, as though by clock-work; his eyes were restless and full of fire.

"Patience, father!" said Teddy, "or I must stop this."

"G—go—go on."

His teeth rattled against the glass which his son held to his lips; he could scarcely drink the liquid that had been tendered him.

"The deed conveyed part of his property—that

is, the estates in Warwickshire, valued at sixty thousand pounds—to us."

"Hurrah!—it comes at last, the turn of luck for which I sold my soul years ago—I knew it somehow—I felt that it would come—that I was not always to drag on a pauper's life—and the deed, Zach? Good Zach, best of young fellows, and sharp as the devil himself!—you found it, you say?"

"No—I do not say that. It was destroyed by Mrs. Henwood."

"De—destroyed!"

"Burnt."

Mr. Fernwell launched his empty glass at "good Zach's" head at once, and Zach was fortunate enough to dip his head in time, and let the glass shiver to fragments against the opposite wall. A torrent of oaths escaped the father's lips; he seemed about to make an effort to struggle up in bed, when Teddy's strong hand kept him in his place.

"Steady—you have not heard the rest," said the elder son in his ear.

"I knew he couldn't come here for any good!" cried Mr. Fernwell—"that he wanted to buoy me up, and then dash me down with his accursed climax—it's just like him. It's all to torture me, and drive me mad, or kill me. He wants me dead—I see it in his eyes."

"I will proceed—I have brought good news, I tell you," reasserted Zach.

"I don't see it—I don't see it," moaned Mr. Richard Fernwell.

"The story is soon finished, and then we can confer upon the facts. Mrs. Henwood——"

"She ought to be hanged!—I hope to God that she'll be hanged!" gasped the father—"to take other people's money away from them—it's infamous!"

Zach waited for his father's greater composure, then he commenced anew—

"Mrs. Henwood destroyed the deed, but not before a copy of it had been taken by her daughter."

"Why didn't she burn the copy?—who was fool enough to give her the original?"

"A romantic girl, or a fool of a woman—my wife."

"She ought to be hanged too."

"Will you allow me to proceed without these interruptions?" asked Zach, more sharply—"reserve your comments till the end. I object to this course."

He was losing his temper; he had been accustomed to command so long, to expound, and to be reverentially listened to, that he could not brook this constant interference without a protest against its impropriety. Mr. Richard Fernwell

received it with a calmness that even Zach did not anticipate ; he was secretly anxious to discover in what way the chance of riches still remained for him and his—especially for him !

“ Go on, Zach—you mean well after all, I see. You come here for the sake of the father—an injured man, robbed of his property by wholesale—fallen amongst thieves, poor fellow ! ” he cried ; “ go on—how can we get rich, we three, and over-reach that dreadful woman ? ”

“ I will explain. Are you listening, Teddy ? ”

“ I have not lost a word,” was the answer.

Teddy was looking steadily before him, full of thought rather than of interest. The variations that had evolved from this story had not affected him ; even when his father had thrown the glass at Zach, he had quietly risen, and whispered his injunctions ; and those injunctions having been attended to, he had dropped into his place again, and assumed the same grave looks.

Zach went on—

“ The letter written by Mrs. Henwood’s father is still in existence ; the copy of the deed of gift we have ; one of the witnesses to that deed, a very old man, is living still—it has cost me fifty pounds to find him—Mrs. Henwood will not deny the destruction of that document, and is a woman too weak to bear up against an inquiry of this nature.”

"It's a poor case—we shan't get a halfpenny!" whined the father.

"If it be necessary to go to law, we shall assuredly obtain our rights," said Zach, firmly.

"Yes, we ought to have our rights," affirmed Mr. Fernwell; "you'll excuse me interrupting you again, my dear boy, but we are entitled to our rights, decidedly. Still, the law's infernally uncertain, though I can swear to anything, you know, if a good witness is required. Zach," he cried, more eagerly, "why should not I say that the old man always promised me a fortune with his daughter?"

"This will not do," said Teddy, turning almost fiercely to his father; "don't brood on fresh duplicity at so late an hour as this. Think how near you may be to the end of your life!—oh! why won't you think?"

"This fellow is half a preacher, Zach," said Fernwell, ironically—"that Martin Wynn melted him into a good boy, and softened his brain in the process. Don't brood on fresh duplicity, indeed! by heaven! hasn't the woman at Wimbledon played me false—ruined me—kept me a beggar for no end of years?"

"Raised Zach from beggary to independence, giving him indirectly the money back—yes."

"I raised myself," said Zach, sternly; "she would have kept me to a petty clerkship, or cast

me off, if the whim had suited her—I owe no gratitude to Mrs. Henwood."

"It is not worth arguing about now," was Teddy's careless reply ; "it is getting late, and our father is tired."

"Not a bit," asserted Mr. Fernwell ; "that's another lie of yours, Teddy. I'm only a little short of breath, and rather chilly—that's all. There was too much water with that brandy, and it has struck cold to my inside. Now, Zach, about the law of this !"

He gave a tug to the counterpane and drew it beneath his chin, shivering as he spoke. The long wasted fingers—more like the claws of a bird than bearing a resemblance to human hands—were interlaced together, and cracked and snapped occasionally with their rigidity of clasp. The face peering above the coverlet was all eagerness and greed.

"About the law," repeated Zach. "I know enough of Mrs. Henwood's character to be assured that my partner will not go to law ; that she will agree to any sacrifice rather than have an exposure of this case. Fortunately for us, she is not a strong-minded woman."

"Good !" gasped Mr. Fernwell.

"Teddy and I will call upon her—that is already arranged between us—state our case, and make our claim," said Zach.

“Not forgetting interest on the money,” cried Fernwell.

“We will waive interest if the matter can be settled between our solicitors,” said Zach; “and content ourselves with twenty thousand pounds a-piece. A fair sum, and not to be despised.”

“Teddy agrees to this?” said Fernwell, looking at his eldest son.

“Teddy agrees,” responded he.

“What a glorious stroke of luck!” cried Mr. Fernwell exultantly; “the Fernwells rising at last to greatness—all of a bunch, too—the act-drop falling on a blaze of triumph. If I had only known this twelve months ago, I——”

He paused and looked doubtfully at Zach, who concluded his sentence for him.

“Would not have attempted to rob my wharf. Well, I return good for evil. I forgive the past.”

“We’ll forgive one another,” said Mr. Fernwell; “for I have had a grievance as well as you. You did not act on the square with me, and I—hated you very much. What’s that?”

Zach was unfolding a paper that he had produced from the breast-pocket of his coat.

“This is a document which I wish to read to you, and which requires your signature.”

“What is it?”

“Your will,” was the cool reply.

Mr. Fernwell took a long breath at this. His

eyebrows lowered so much that they concealed his glittering eyes for a while, and he suffered still more from that shortness of breath against which he had already protested.

“There’s time enough for that,” he said at last.

“Every precaution is necessary in a case of this kind,” said Zach, in a business kind of manner; “you will not die an hour the sooner for a signature that will save your sons much trouble.”

“I can write my own will, thank you,” was the dogged answer.

“If you die without a will, we shall have considerable difficulty,” said Zachary; “now it is the mere matter of a signature.”

“You’re infernally clever!” said Mr. Fernwell savagely; “so kind, too, to fill up my will after the manner that most suits yourself, and to allow me not a voice in the matter. That’s like Zachary Fernwell—a man of extraordinary acuteness.”

Zach did not flinch at the irony; he turned upon his father at once, and gave his pitiless reply.

“It is in my hands to make terms with Mrs. Henwood alone, and sink all evidence. But I come to offer benefits to all; and I must have my own way, or you shall never touch a penny of the money.”

“It strikes me that unless Teddy is on your side—Teddy and I together—your case will lose half its weight.”

"I might be content with half the money," was the dry reply.

"Cursed glum over it all, *you* are," said Fernwell, turning upon his elder son; "why don't you say something, and not sit, all of a heap there, like a Guy Fawkes!"

"What shall I say?" asked Teddy wearily. "I am tired of this—I am heart-sick of it!"

"Read what your considerate brother has scrawled there," said Fernwell. "I'd rather not trust him to read it."

Zach passed the paper to his brother, and Teddy read its contents hurriedly—so hurriedly that his father twice called him to order for his indecent haste, and swore twice at him also.

It was a short document, that last will and testament of Richard Fernwell. It divided his property and personal effects, money in the funds, shares in public companies, &c., &c., between Zachary Fernwell, otherwise Henwood, of Henwood's Wharves, and Edward Fernwell, of Upper Ground Street, minus a legacy of seven thousand pounds, bequeathed to his daughter-in-law, Lettice. It constituted Edward and Zachary Fernwell executors, and it wound up with a blessing on the *three* children that Providence had bestowed upon him.

"It's not a bad idea," said Mr. Fernwell, slowly; "it keeps the money in the family, and my daughter Lettice deserves to be rewarded for turning informer

against her mother. You come in for rather a small half, Teddy," he added; "but then Zach knows how contented you are with a little!"

"Twenty-six thousands pounds is not a little," remarked Zachary; "it will place my brother in any position that seems most fitting to himself. The will is just enough."

"I shall keep it in my possession. I'll have no tricks played with this one," said Mr. Fernwell.

"If you doubt me, place the will in Teddy's hands. We can both trust him."

"Well, I don't mind that."

"And the witnesses?" asked Zach. "Are there two honest people in the house?"

"Um! that's doubtful," said Mr. Fernwell. "Teddy, find Jackson, and any one else that's handy. This is a queer game, mind you—it's an over-precaution I *don't* like at all. It makes a man so damned low-spirited."

Teddy was proceeding on his mission, when Mr. Fernwell called him back to remind him that the glass was broken, and that excitement had rendered him horribly thirsty; then the father took up the will from the bed, where his son had placed it, and made an ineffectual effort to peruse it for himself. He laid it down with a sigh, and stretched forth a hand and long arm suddenly, startling Zach by fastening his talons on his shoulder.

"Zach, I know what is in your thoughts—but

it's a mistake! You fancy—ha!—ha!—that I'm going to die!"

"You may live many years," said Zach; "but life is ever uncertain, and it is best to arrange one's affairs. Long ago I made my will."

"You?"

"It was a matter of form, but it relieved my mind."

"You won't make old bones—you're likely to die as soon as your father. You were a shrimp of a child, and you're a shrimp of a man! By George! that would be a good joke to die first, after all!"

"I don't see the joke of it," answered Zach.

"You need not have troubled yourself about the will," said Mr. Fernwell, "for I shall not die in a dungeon like this—now the good-luck's coming to me. That would be too hard upon a man—I shouldn't think it—fair."

He still kept his hold on his son's shoulder, much to Zach's dissatisfaction. Zach could feel the impress of every nail.

"I should like, for a year or two, to be rich. To forget all this!" Fernwell said, eagerly; "to have a carriage and pair, and a cellar full of brandy, and to see you now and then—and Teddy very often. Now he's gone, I'll tell you that he's a good fellow, only hatefully pious. I chaff him about his piety; but he *is* a good fellow

for all that, and if I had only had the bringing of him up, he would have been the prince of all good fellows, with not a blemish on him!"

"He comes here every day?"

"Ay. To take care of me too, and to try and make me good. That's a capital joke, Zach, but I pretend it isn't, at times, just to please him. Lord! how he brightens up, if he fancies that I am on the turn of the road he wants me to take. As if all roads weren't alike, or there was anything in his preaching. As if I was going to die, too—or my constitution wouldn't get over twice as much as this!"

Teddy reappeared, followed by Mr. Jackson—who was rubbing his eyes, and looking sulkily over his knuckles—and a little old man in the shoemaking line, and about the best of the denizens of Drag's Court. Teddy carried an inkstand and pen in one hand, and a fresh glass for his father's stimulant in another. He had forgotten nothing.

"This looks a solemn bit of stuff," said Mr. Fernwell; "but it's a mere form, to please a son who has brought me lots of good news. I hope I can write—I have a hand that shakes like an old woman's. Pass over the pen, Teddy."

Mr. Fernwell affixed his signature with difficulty, Teddy steadyng his hand. Mr. Jackson and the cobbler attested the deed, and then

Fernwell placed the will under the pillow.

"I keep it, boy, for the present," he said. "Some day I may want you to read it to me again—some long day hence, when you and I are in our great house in the country, eh?"

Zach looked at his watch.

"I have a long distance to go," he said, "and it is late. To-morrow, or the next day, I will call on you again."

"With fresh news, I hope. Something more substantial, Zach—for we may lose this money."

"We are sure of it."

"When do you see Mrs. Henwood?"

"It will be better for Teddy and me to see her together—when you can spare him, I am ready."

"I'll spare him now—to-morrow—any time. I shall be very glad when it's all settled—it seems to throw—me—back a bit."

He closed his eyes as though he was going to faint again, and Teddy administered more brandy to him, motioning at the same time for the visitors to retire. Mr. Jackson and the cobbler went away, mystified at all these proceedings. Zach prepared to follow them.

"Good night," he said to his father, twice before the answer came.

"Good night," muttered Mr. Fernwell at last, without opening his eyes.

Teddy saw his brother to the door of the house,

where Zach paused for an instant, as if he had more to say.

“How long will he live—do you know?”

“God knows,” answered Teddy.

“It is well that he has made that will—see to it—it was a lucky thought of mine.”

“Possibly.”

“Better for us that it should end like this, Teddy. His life has been unprofitable, and would disgrace ours to the end. Be secret concerning everything for the present. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Teddy watched his brother along the court and under the archway to the wider street beyond; then he turned back and went thoughtfully downstairs again. The night's work had disturbed him, and had not satisfied him, it was evident.

He reopened the room door, and entered. Then he paused and looked with dismay at the scene which had changed in his absence. His father had, by some means, and by a desperate effort of his remaining strength, struggled into a position that enabled him to lie almost on his face, with his two hands clutching his unshaven chin. Crumpled beneath him was the will that he had signed, and which he was intently studying again. Above it was the ink-bottle, overturned, and its contents streaming in a long, black, serpentine course over the pillow, and the student.

“What is this?” cried Teddy; “what are you doing now? Is it worth while to think more of this scheming for a woman’s ruin—this plotting and planning away money that is not ours yet—and may never be ours.”

“Pick up the pen—pick up the pen!” cried Fernwell, hoarse with his new excitement; “I’m not the fool he thinks me—or the tool that he would make me, curse him! I shall live to vex him yet, these twenty years, but he shan’t have the ghost of a chance of *MY* money, these twenty seconds. Give me the pen.”

“What are you doing?” repeated Teddy.

“I’m—I’m making a codicil—I shall want it witnessed again by the same people—by more than the same people, for security—lots of witnesses; look them up—I’ll—I’ll not be humbugged by a boy like that. I’m a scholar—I understand the law—the forms of law. Dick Fernwell knew everything, and profited by nothing—ha!—ha!—by nothing. Why don’t you give me the pen?”

“Let me write what you dictate.”

“I’d rather do it myself—I’m as strong as a horse to-night—getting better fast, Teddy. Give me the pen, and see if there’s any ink left in the bottle.”

Teddy picked up the pen, took the will from beneath his father’s elbow, removed the inkstand, and sat down at the table.

"You revoke all past bequests," said Teddy ; "what else ?"

"You see it's not written badly for me—I should have managed it, if the cursed ink hadn't tilted over. Here's a mess !"

"You revoke all past bequests—go on."

"And leave all my property, and interest of property due, or about to be due to me, to Edward Fernwell, my eldest son."

Teddy stopped, paused for an instant, then wrote rapidly the words as spoken by his father.

"And I appoint Edward Fernwell my sole executor."

The codicil was written, and passed to Mr. Fernwell, whilst Teddy went once more in search of witnesses. Mr. Fernwell was still studying his last will and testament, when Mr. Jackson and the cobbler, with attendant friends, returned, Mr. Jackson protesting energetically at the conspiracy against his rest.

"It's for the last time, Jackson !" cried Fernwell ; "you're—the best—of men to come."

Codicil signed and witnessed, and Mr. Fernwell's thanks for the trouble that all his friends and fellow-lodgers had taken. The witnesses withdrawn, the will in the son's possession, Mr. Fernwell still face downwards, holding his chin with his claws, and staring at the ink-stained pillow.

"You'll try and rest now, father ?" said Teddy.

“This is rest—it’s a change of position, and quite—comfortable. How I turned myself round, I don’t know. You’ve got the will ?”

“Yes.”

“Take it home and lock it up,” he said.

“I shall remain the rest of the night here.”

“Very good. You ought to be grateful—I’ve done a good deal for you, haven’t I ?”

“Yes.”

“Zach never was grateful for anything—so Mrs. Henwood will say, the old cat ! An artful dodge of Zach’s to get a share of *MY* property down for his wife. *In-ge-nious !*”

His hands or elbows suddenly gave way, and his face fell forwards heavily. Teddy was at his side, with one strong arm raising him again. It had been a night of great events, and he did not think it was ended even then.

“Father,” he cried, “do you feel worse ?”

Mr. Fernwell made an effort to wipe the ink from his face ; it had marked him at the last with a foul brand, and rendered him more hideous. Teddy removed it with his handkerchief, and then looked more closely at his father.

“Don’t say that you are going away—like this !”

“Not yet, Teddy,” he murmured ; “years yet—for me !”

“No, no—don’t think that now—at the last. For this is *death !*”

“Eh!” gasped Fernwell; “who says so?—who knows?”

“I am certain.”

“It's only another—fainting fit—I've been too much worried. No,” with a half shriek, “it isn't a fit! By God! you're right!”

“By that God whose laws you have set aside and trampled on, think now, and try to pray to Him for mercy. Oh! *do* try!”

“I—I can't.”

“You are sorry—very sorry for the past. Ask Him to forgive it!”

“Yes—I am sorry!”

“Ask Him with me—now!”

He made one feeble effort to follow the earnest prayer that passed from his son's lips, then his head grew very heavy on Teddy's arm—and all was over with him.

There was one less in Drag's Court—and one more mourner!

BOOK VII.

“SIXES AND SEVENS.”



CHAPTER I.

MRS. HENWOOD RECEIVES VISITORS.

MRS. HENWOOD had come back early from her wanderings. In the middle of November, she was once more an inmate of her house at Wimbledon. She had tried Scarborough for August, but its pomps and vanities had palled upon her ; she had met no old acquaintances, and had been twice snubbed by the new ones, after immense efforts to get on speaking terms with them. She had returned to London, and dashed off to Paris ; she had been ever partial to the gay capital in her best days, but whether the gaiety was not to her taste now, or her best days were over, it is certain that Paris did not please her, and that in the foggiest, dampest, dirtiest month of the year, she was at home again.

Mrs. Henwood had become an unsettled woman. We have seen this state of unrest growing upon her—witnessed it lead her into much extravagance of conduct. She was forty-five years of age now, and should have exhibited that staidness of deportment consistent with her years. But she was a

woman with a secret on her mind still—for she was not aware of the machinery at work against her, and the wheels that had gone round in Drag's Court—and it preyed upon that mind, never very strong. She was a woman who had been disappointed—who had lost caste with herself—who had made love to a marqueterie worker, and been repulsed from his arms; she had become burdened with thought, and had lost much of her vanity—altogether then a miserable woman !

It was a grand instance of solitariness, shut up in that great house, but she laboured hard to consider herself content with it. She did not see a great deal of her daughter, but seeing enough to be certain of Lettice's unhappiness, was not to make her heart light, though all seemed coming round as she had prophesied. Lettice had been a strange, ungrateful, self-willed woman, putting herself ever against the mother, and returning suspicion for suspicion ; but Mrs. Henwood thought more of Lettice now, for she thought less of herself. She fancied that her daughter shunned her—nay, she was sure of it. Mrs. Henwood had begun to think that society was very tiresome—not worth the trouble of dressing for, or spending money upon ; and although there were still flashes of that old vain spirit, which had turned her head with her own charms, and led her into extravagance, still she knew

that she was not happy in her widowhood. If Martin Wynn would not have her, she did not see why she should remain in single blessedness for his sake. She thought sometimes that she would encourage Mr. Tinchester more, for he had been a faithful servant, and if anybody liked her on this earth, it was that gentleman; but she sighed in his company again, and thought what a little, old-fashioned, pottering man he was, with no idea in the world above the wharves at the water-side—a little man, who bobbed and hopped about her drawing-room more after the fashion of the sparrow-tribe than of human-kind. But she was very lonely; Martin Wynn was a rock of adamant, she knew, and Tinchester was a man with a certain amount of affection for her. She might have married before this, for the world was cognizant of her wealth, and skeletons with money-bags are ever at a premium; but she possessed some sense, and more shrewdness, and an undisguised effort to obtain her cash set her always against the wooer. She was not a miserly woman, the reader is aware, and when misers made a dash at her, and grovelled in the dust for the sake of her wealth, she had the discretion to flutter away from their clutches. It had all been pleasant sport enough, and rendered her popular; but the excitement was over, the pleasure had palled, and there she was still alone in the world, sick of

society, troubled with the crime of bond-destroying, deserted by her daughter and her son-in-law, and wondering whatever would become of her.

She was wondering that very morning in November when we look in upon her, sitting before her polished fire-grate, and shivering, despite the good fire in front of her. She continued to age rapidly—that had once been her greatest trouble, the rapidity with which the wrinkles came, and the necessity that there had been to eke out a scanty crop of hair, with French curls—ay, when she was thirty years of age! She had begun to “make up” at thirty; and it was a terrible truth that at forty-five years of age she looked, shorn of decoration, almost ten years an older woman. She believed that fact at last; her maids had deceived her, and her flatterers had deceived her, until then; now she had grown a woman who judged for herself. Also a woman who did not study appearances so much, but occasionally exhibited a recklessness concerning them, that was new to the domesticities at Wimbledon, and showed how unhappy she was.

She was disregarding appearances that day. No one was expected; it was raining without, and she was not likely to be intruded upon—the side-curls were upstairs on the wig-block, the rouge had not been touched, and it was an old Mrs. Henwood who sat in the drawing-room with an

unheeded novel in her lap. She had been trying to read, but she had never liked reading, and the effort failing her, she had given herself up for "a good think;" and terribly miserable she was looking over it, for, as before remarked, she was wondering what would become of her.

Still wondering, when a formidable summons at the street door startled the few nerves that she had ever possessed. Mrs. Henwood leaped from her chair at the thought of visitors catching her in *déshabille*, put her hands to her shorn temples, to make sure that she had come down without her curls that morning, and gathered the skirts of her dressing-gown round her. She was preparing to run for it, when the servant made his appearance in the drawing-room.

"Who is it?" she cried—"any of the Browns, or the Wilkins' ?—show them into the breakfast-room, and tell them that I will be down in a minute."

"It's young Mr. Henwood."

"Young Mr. Henwood ?" said Mrs. Henwood—"oh ! never mind, then—show him in."

It did not matter about her son-in-law ; she was not going to put herself out of the way for him, she thought, a little resentfully ; he might see how old and careworn she really looked, if he chose—perhaps he would tell Lettice, and Lettice would come to Wimbledon to see her mother.

Zachary was announced, and Zachary entered the room, followed by his brother, whom for an instant Mrs. Henwood did not recognize.

"I thought you were alone," she said irritably, her mind reverting to the side curls again; "the servant only mentioned your name."

"I told him not—it was scarcely necessary, Mrs. Henwood," said Zach, stiffly; "this is my brother, Edward Fernwell."

Mrs. Henwood gave a little jump as she recognized the gentleman whom Zach had introduced to her in this free-and-easy manner. She bowed to him, however, and looked askance at him as he returned her bow. She had heard Mr. Wynn speak well of this man—but she had mistrusted him herself, for he was a Fernwell, with bad blood in his veins. It consoled her to think that he *was* bad; it reconciled him with her past actions. And now they came in together—for the first time in their lives those brothers together—and she was sure that the elder one was bad enough then, crafty and revengeful as the serpent whom she had reared.

She felt, on the instant, that they came there as despoilers of her peace—merciless men, who would take away the few scraps of comfort that remained to her—men who had found out everything, perhaps! She did not notice that they were both in mourning, until they had been sitting before her some minutes; she only knew that she

did not like their looks, and that they threatened danger to her. Her nerves gave way again, and she began to tremble as she subsided into that chair from which they had aroused her ; she did not know how much she was in their power, or what was the punishment for the act that her rashness had committed.

Zach saw that he had but a poor adversary, and it was with a contemptuous smile that he began.

“Mrs. Henwood, I have taken the liberty to lock the door, in order that we may not be interrupted.”

“I did not notice it.”

“I am very sorry to say that my brother and I have come here on most serious business. The nature of that business will explain the coldness that has sprung up between us, and my reasons for asking Lettice to absent herself from this house.”

Yes, they knew all, thought Mrs. Henwood, with a sinking heart. Now, let her wonder more than ever what would become of her from this present day !

“I have not come, Mrs. Henwood, to make a long accusation myself—to ask for my rights, and why they have been abused so much. I leave that to my elder brother, who is the man that will fight this injustice to the end, if it be necessary to ask the Law to interfere. My brother, who has been more wronged than I.”

The Law ! It was an ugly word—it dashed her

down at once. The weak woman spread her thin hands before her face, and cried a little ; when the hands dropped into her lap, there were a few more years imprinted on her countenance.

“I wish harm to no one—I would not do harm, if I could help it. Have I not benefited you enough ?”

“That is a matter for future argument. I increased your business, and you made me your partner, and gave me your daughter for a wife. Madam, I was intensely grateful, until I discovered that all this kindness was simply an atonement—*partly* an atonement—for an act of treachery towards me and my family.”

“Lettice has told you——”

“Everything.”

“Well, well, tell me what you want ? I should have told you myself before I died, for it was a rash act, and it has greatly troubled me.”

“My brother will tell you what arrangements we have concluded together—what we think fair to us, and merciful to you.”

She looked at Teddy again, and he, who had been intently watching her, coloured as their eyes met.

“My brother wishes me to speak in this case,” said Teddy, thus appealed to ; “it looks better, perhaps is better, madam. I have thought a great deal of this story of a hidden document—it

has been a study with me lately—it has even struck me, that it was your father's intention to destroy that deed, whenever he was convinced of the complete unworthiness of our family. I believe that if he had not died suddenly, he would have burned it instead of you."

"I am sure of it," cried Mrs. Henwood, eagerly; "I have thought so much about it myself lately—tried to remember so much, too—and have succeeded. He was anxious about the cabinet on his death-bed—only a few days before he had found out—"

"Our unworthiness," added Teddy; "our low estate and guilty lives—very likely."

"This is not to the purpose," said Zach; "we cannot argue upon imaginative points whilst facts exist."

"You will allow me to explain," said Teddy, coldly; "I have agreed with you, I think, upon this matter?"

"Yes—we are agreed."

"Facts exist, my brother says," said Teddy; "and I believe honestly with him that it is your duty to us, to your God, to make atonement for a great error."

Mrs. Henwood objected to this tirade upon duty—she saw nothing but hypocrisy in it. It was all true enough; but she was not to be told her duty by a Fernwell—by a man equal to his bro-

ther in rapacity. It angered her, but it rendered her more strong.

“What atonement do you require?” she asked; “and what are the existing facts with which you threaten me?”

“The facts are a copy of the deed of gift, the testimony of a witness still living to its authenticity, and a letter of your father's which accompanied that deed.”

“Such evidence would not render your cause successful,” she said, like a woman who would make the best bargain for herself; “but I am getting old, and I think,” appealing to Zach in preference to his brother, “that the family need not be disgraced by so pitiful a story as this. You are a Henwood now, and should fight my battles for me.”

“Madam, you would have ruined me,” said Zach; “you would have cast me back to the streets—you would have done so, but for Lettice.”

“No,” cried Mrs. Henwood; “you should have never been cast back. I only wanted my daughter to myself, and you might have made your own terms with me.”

“At his expense,” said Zach, pointing to his brother.

“Oh! I knew nothing of him; he was a thief before I knew you. I saw his name in the papers more than once; he was living with his father, and I was afraid of him.”

"With a perfect right to feel afraid, Mrs. Henwood," answered Teddy; "for I *was* a thief, then—and only saved, later in life, from utter ruin."

"What do you want now?—let us settle this," she cried impatiently.

"My brother and I propose to end this matter without the law's interference"—Mrs. Henwood began to shiver again—"without the story becoming known to your friends. The deed conveyed the Warwickshire estates to the Fernwell family, and those estates were sold for sixty thousand pounds. Well," said Teddy, with a sharpness that startled Zachary, as well as Mrs. Henwood, "we want that money."

Had the desire for wealth come to him too? It is a natural desire, to which the best of us are prone, and Teddy knew the value of money, and what changes it would make in his life. He looked very eagerly towards his aunt, as though her decision were important to him; for the first time in his life he resembled his father; and yet there was a strange look in his eyes that was not cupidity, but simply an eagerness that was intense.

Zach moved in his chair; he was a suspicious man, and the thought crossed him suddenly and unpleasantly that he might have trusted too much in Teddy, and Teddy might be ready to over-reach

him presently. From that instant he was on guard against his brother.

"You want sixty thousand pounds—great heavens! It would almost ruin me now."

"It is reparation—we have been robbed of that sum," argued Teddy. "We are considerate in claiming nothing for interest on that money held back from us. We forgive the past—we actually forego part of our rights, madam. All this," turning to Zach, "is as you wish, I believe."

"Yes; I think that is fair."

"I don't think—I am nearly sure that the money is not available," said Mrs. Henwood. "I have spent a great deal—I have relied upon the business—I shall have to sell some property, and dispose of my diamonds, before I can make it up. It is next door to ruin."

"That is impossible," corrected Zach; "but I should be loth to press you for my share, if it will in any way inconvenience you. You, Mrs. Henwood, have expressed regret for the past, and have made no effort to resist us. My share I will resign for your share in the business, if you prefer it."

Mrs. Henwood coloured; all the Henwood pride in her mounted to her cheeks, that pride in her business which had made more than one fortune. To be set aside, to let it all pass into his hands at last; and yet to get rid of the worry of business, of this partner, of a debt of twenty

thousand pounds, and of her crime together!

"I will think of it," she said; "the money or the business shall be yours."

She faced her other opponent then, and said,

"I will make atonement at this heavy cost to you and your father—there, you have the best of me, for I own that is just enough."

"My father is dead, madam," said Teddy, "therefore his share is disposed of by will. You will kindly pay to me as his executor that share in addition to my own."

Zach did not like this remark; Teddy had been reserved lately concerning his father's will; had kept it back, and put him off in several questions that he wished to make.

"Or Mrs. Henwood can pay the amount to the legatees," said Zach.

"Exactly," answered Teddy. "The will shall be produced on the next meeting, and I hope that the money will be forthcoming."

"You need not fear, sir," said Mrs. Henwood.

"There will be lawyers with us in the next meeting," said Teddy; "it is necessary for a few formal deeds and signatures."

"I do not see the necessity," said Mrs. Henwood. "If I give you the money, what else is required?"

"Security from *us*, Edward and Zachary Fernwell, that we hold ourselves pledged to take no ulterior proceedings in this case."

"Oh! I did not think of that. Yes—yes—that will be necessary. I must tell my own solicitor something of the truth, and he shall meet yours. But what made *you* think of this?"

"It appeared necessary—that's all. And the money—when can we have it?"

"When you like," said Mrs. Henwood.

"We purpose calling here in a fortnight's time—or at your solicitors'."

"I will let Zachary know the day."

"But—"

"But you need not fear my change of mind. I am anxious to satisfy all claims upon me. I have been a wicked woman enough. God forgive me!"

"Amen!" said Teddy.

Mrs. Henwood again looked fiercely towards the speaker. He had come to grasp at her money, but she could bear that better than any hypocrisy of religion. She could not believe in any religious feeling in these Fernwells—they were all thoroughly bad!

"I need not detain *you* any longer," she said, with no little asperity. "In a short while you shall have your money, sir. You"—she spoke with bitterness here—"are only asking for your rights; if you had demanded more, I am a weak woman, and must have given way to you. In your power, gentlemen, at last!"

"Madam, our power is—" began Teddy, then

he stopped, looked at her, at Zach, at the velvet carpet, and was silent. He never finished his sentence ; he buttoned his black coat to the throat in a nervous manner, and in his absence of mind put on his hat at once.

“I am going,” he said, at last. “You remain here, Zach ?”

“A little while,” answered the brother. “In a few days you will hear from me.”

Teddy went away, and Mrs. Henwood turned with excitement to her son-in-law, as the door closed on the elder brother.

“All this may be just enough—*is* just,” she corrected ; “but still you keep me in the dark. I cannot understand why you, of all men, turn against me.”

“I have not turned against you, Mrs. Henwood.”

“Why did you not spare me—your wife’s mother—this bitter humiliation ?” she cried. “Wherefore the necessity of taking your brother into your confidence, and bringing him here, a witness to my shame ?”

It was a cry of baffled pride, and there was no repentance in it, then. Zach repressed a smile at his mother-in-law’s dismay—at her eccentric reasoning. He could take the vantage-ground of a higher principle than hers ; it was a new position, too, that pleased him.

“My brother was an injured man. I could not

let him remain in indigence, when the power to raise him was in my hands."

"You raise him at your own expense," said Mrs. Henwood, not heeding her visitor's feelings in her argument, not thinking of them even; "and that is so remarkable for you!"

Zach coloured. Yes, that would have been remarkable, had it been true.

"Why could we not have given him a sum of money equal to that which he demands, and kept this secret from him? He would have jumped at it greedily enough, and you would have spared me more."

"It would have been satisfactory to a few of us," said Zachary; "but it was not for me to propose this new way to pay old debts."

"I have no friends in the world—no relations, save my daughter and—and *you*!" she added with a wrench; "could you not have waited for my death, and taken everything!"

"Mrs. Henwood," said Zach with cutting politeness, "allow me to explain that conduct of mine which seems at present incomprehensible to you. I might have done this, or something like this, for your sake, but—I could not trust you."

"Trust me!" exclaimed Mrs. Henwood.

"*You* know what a terrible thing want of confidence is," said Zach in the same calm, measured tones, "for you have distrusted me all my life, and

set yourself, until our partnership, in opposition to me. I was bad enough, perhaps—I am not a hero—but you rendered me worse by your suspicions. In my turn, I learned to distrust everybody with whom I came in contact—you along with the rest."

"I have deserved it!" moaned Mrs. Henwood.

"I distrusted you before this destruction of the bond," continued Zach, "for I read your character correctly, and saw too well its vanity and frivolity, and where it would lead you. In plain truth, I fought hard for the partnership, because it was my only chance—because it was as certain as death that you would marry again, and send me adrift."

"You have watched me very closely," said Mrs. Henwood sharply.

"Yes. It has been my business to watch—for you were in love with a man beneath you in station, and that man would have secured all your money and kept it away from me."

"Well—he shall not have it all."

Mrs. Henwood lay back in her chair, a weak and powerless woman. This man knew everything—had filled her own house with spies, doubtless—on every action of her life there had been an incessant watch.

"I doubted your wish to remain a widow," said Zach, "and I doubted what will you might write, or in whose favour it might be drawn. So, Mrs.

Henwood, I struck out for myself a course that has tended to a little embarrassment, but which, you will agree with me, was the most safe and *sure*."

Mrs. Henwood made no further reply. She remained heaped in her chair, a miserable woman; she was wholly at his mercy—there was nothing worth responding to, she considered. Let him have his say—and go. He had spoken many bitter truths, and shown her how deep and calculating a man he was; it would be well for her when she was quit of him. Let the dissolution of partnership take place, and leave her to enjoy—*to enjoy!*—the remainder of her fortune; at least, she would be quit of this man.

Zach rose after a while, and stood before her with a hand extended.

"I have fairly explained my motives," he said, "and you must blame my teaching, rather than myself, if I have shown my worldliness too much. We may be better friends for this."

"We may," murmured she.

He still kept his hand outstretched, and she placed hers within it at last. It was necessary that a semblance of good feeling should exist between them; she could not afford to make him her enemy. Thus they parted, and it was only when she was assured that no further intrusion would be made upon her, that this unhappy woman gave way altogether.

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY JAR.

FAINTLY as the "minor character" of Lettice Henwood has been sketched upon our canvas, the reader has become sufficiently acquainted with it to feel assured that Lettice inherited much of her mother's eccentricity, allied to a restlessness of disposition peculiarly her own.

She was a woman who had had but little chance of happiness possibly, whose self-will had taken her the wrong road early in life, and who lessened every chance by a disposition that tried herself, her husband, and all connected with her. A clever, but a hard girl—stern where she should have been womanly, and yet, by a strange contrariety, romantic and unreal where a certain worldliness would have stood her in better stead. An incomprehensible woman, to whom we would have devoted more space for analysis had it been necessary for the working of our story, and to whom we turn at the eleventh hour, to note how her actions altered very materially the future fortunes of the brothers Fernwell—our leading characters, and the ruling agents of this story.

Zach had said nothing to his brother, or Mrs. Henwood, of a considerable amount of unhappiness at home—special unhappiness, which he had brought on himself, and which had helped to render things uncomfortable Stamford Hill way. The child that had been born to him had not tended to ameliorate matters; the stormy elements of life had set in, and Zach was holding his ground for the sake of the moral. Lettice and he had quarrelled more than once concerning the assignment that had been discovered and destroyed; Zach had followed up his clue, and obtained possession of all leading facts whilst Lettice was a prisoner in her room; and when she was well enough to make her way downstairs again, she came in for the full force of marital upbraiding, just enough in some respects, but marked by a severity that crushed out the poetry of the whole affair, and humiliated Lettice. Zach was a stern man in private life; in his best moods a phlegmatic individual, taking everything as his due, and patronizing Lettice by a stray word of kindness, or a fugitive caress; in his worst moods harsh, uncharitable, and unforgiving.

He was a man who preferred business, and the profits to be derived from it, to his wife on all occasions; his wife was for the few leisure moments that he could spare for his home, and it was always an affront to him if she were not ready to

be his slave on those occasions. He scarcely knew whether he loved his wife or not; he had never loved her so much as he had pretended, of that he was aware; and he had had, once upon a time, a liking—or a sneaking—for Arabella Evvers; but whether he had ever really loved his wife was a doubtful point, which he did not consider worth deliberation. He was aware that she loved him—that her resentment of his absence from her was even a part of that affection—and there had been, before the birth of his child, a few stray thoughts concerning less business in the future, and more time for Lettice and her society—even a far-away dream of retirement, and he and Lettice in a country home together. If he had spoken of these thoughts, it would have been better for him, but he had a soul above childish imagery, and there was not time even—there never was time!

Lettice believed that she was not loved, that she never had been. She saw very clearly now how much of scheming there had been in his courtship, and she was a woman with a bias to the worst side—a suspicious woman, too, who took after her mother. Months ago she had thought herself wronged; latterly she was convinced of it, despite the wrong which she had committed. That wrong had troubled her when her strong imagination had

sided with her weakness ; its confession would have moulded her character anew, had it been received in the right spirit, and with a fair estimate of her motives. But her husband had not time to weigh these fancies, to "go in" for the ideal ; before him ever the one grand pursuit of money, under every circumstance, in the face of every obstacle, even at the risk of all good men's opinion of him, this soul-absorbent chase.

In Lettice's story he had seen only a way to benefit himself—to render himself, by one grand *coup*, by so many thousand pounds a richer man. This was better than business at Henwood's—and he set everything aside, even Lettice, after the expression of sentiments concerning her duplicity, for the new study which was to realize his golden dreams.

True, there was unhappiness at home—an estrangement that had already become serious between his wife and him ; but then, the money ! Wife, home, *himself*, his name on earth, his hope in heaven, what were they all to him, what consideration did they cause him, when there were thousands to be made by the exercise of his ingenuity ? He did not reason thus, for he seldom allowed himself time to reason ; but had he had leisure to reflect whilst posting on to the goal, he would have considered in this fashion. He hurried on, and if he had one opinion more than another,

it was that he was an estimable member of society. Other members, less fortunate than he, went down in his progress, and got under his feet somehow ; he could not stay to raise them, or to pity them, in his triumphant course. There were a few every-day sympathizers—his wife amongst them, before the last difference between them—who told him that he was wearing himself out, and who warned him to be careful of this intense application ; but he answered them with a laugh, and the old jest “that he had not time to feel ill !” and that the busier he was, the stronger seemed to become his constitution.

He came home, however, from Mrs. Henwood’s on the day mentioned in our last chapter, to indulge in a little rest for once. The victory had been won ; Mrs. Henwood had lowered her flag, and he was likely to become very rich, with the business in his own hands. He was even inclined to extend a free forgiveness for all past offences to his wife—as, on memorable occasions, a generous government knocks the fetters from the wrists of all political offenders. Here had been a grievous offender against his policy ; but she was the wife of his bosom, the mother of his child, and he had thought, coming home, of the luxury of forgiving her. We believe that Zach Fernwell would have been a very different man, if he had given himself more time for thought—for those thoughts with

which business had no connection. He went home a different man to him who had left the house without a "good morning" to his helpmate; thinking that it would be a pleasant thing to see that helpmate more often, after all, and dwelling again on that villa in the country, as a thing not wholly impossible before he became middle-aged.

He was dashed down on his return by the stern, set features of his wife. Lettice had been brooding on her own version of that past story, and on the result of Zach's manœuvring. She knew that that day was to decide the matter, as well as Zach did, and she was curious and restless concerning it, more especially as her husband had not asked for any advice, but treated her in his usual way—like a cypher. Apart from her mother, she was inclined to take her mother's part against her husband—just as, apart from Zach in the old courting days, she had been stanch to him, fighting his battles at every opportunity. Verily this would have been a character worth coming into the foreground, had we not fallen amongst thieves at so early a stage of our story.

Zach, not the most amiable of men, accepted the affront that was put upon his clemency, and subsided into his usual—that is, his disagreeable—self. He dropped into his arm-chair, ordered the nurse with the baby from the room, and then buried himself in the *Times* newspaper, that was handy

at his side. After all, there was something more refreshing in the "City Intelligence," than in a wife's apathy ; he could drown in figures any small disappointment that he might have felt. He loved figures !

Lettice was in no taciturn mood, however. She had been taciturn long enough, she thought.

"Are you going to tell me how it has been settled or not ?" she asked angrily ; "or am I not worth a word of explanation ?"

Zach doubled his paper in half, and looked over it at her.

"It did not strike me that you cared to know," he answered ; "but it has been settled satisfactorily."

"What does that mean ?"

"It means that your mother will, without the publicity of a law-suit, carry out the conditions of her father's bond in most respects."

"Just, perhaps," answered Lettice ; "but you—surely you—have shown a certain degree of generosity ?"

"Generosity for what ?"

"For your wife's word. It was a compact between my mother and myself, that in lieu of your share, one-half of the profits of the business should be yours."

"I did not know of this. I was no party to your *compacts*," he said, with a sneer ; "and I object to

any woman making compacts for me. I think that I am able to manage that little business for myself."

"You have taken advantage of my mother's weakness—you have interdicted me from seeing her, lest I should counsel her to resist you; and I have, though under protest, obeyed your wishes——"

"Thank you for your docility," said Zach.

"You have played your cards well, having the whole game in your hands," she continued, not heeding his interruption; "and I demand to know what you have done!"

"Demand, Lettice!" said Zach, gravely; "you should be the last woman to demand anything of me concerning this grave offence against your self-respect, and your husband's interests."

"Have you taken your share with the rest?"

"I have not desired to embarrass your mother. I have accepted a compromise, and allowed her to retire from the business."

"That business will be all yours, then?"

"Yes. Will you congratulate me?"

"No, no—I can't do that. You have not acted generously towards my mother, or me."

"Your mother may not consider so—but you must."

"I will not!" cried Lettice; "I will not congratulate you on your self-abasement. You forget

what my mother did for you—what she saved you from!"

This was an ill-timed allusion, and it added a cloud to Zach's countenance. He abhorred the past, and all those spectres in it which issued thence occasionally to scare him. He was insulted by his wife's allusion to it, and he turned upon her with all that hardness and cruelty of speech for which he was remarkable at Henwood's Wharves, when he lost money by contracts, or met deceit in his subordinates.

"I detest your mother!" he exclaimed; "I have told her so, in my own words, and a little more courteously, to-day—but she knows that I detest her! Knowing that yourself now, Lettice, do not side with her against me. I will not have it in this house—in hers, if you will, if it please you, but not here!"

"What do you mean? That you are tired of me?"

"I am tired of your peevishness, your false views of everything affecting me, your jealousy of that which is my business and my life—the readiness with which you set yourself in opposition!"

"This is not the first time that you have taunted me with being an encumbrance," she said; "nor the first time that I have been assured of the folly that led me to become your wife. I will not have

this tyranny!—I am not the woman to submit to it!"

"You will obey me in everything."

"I will not have my mother robbed of everything she has in the world to benefit a man who proclaims to me, her daughter, his detestation of her. I have a right to protest against it!"

"Not in this house," repeated Zach, coldly.

"Well, in hers, then. I can side with her there—I can be a comfort to her there, making amends for my past ingratitude. If you don't want me here, I can go! I shall be never happy again, for I have lost all confidence in you."

"You have turned your brain with novel-writing, I think," cried Zach; "I haven't time to study you, or to care for your bewilderments. When I come home, I expect something better to greet me than a sour-faced, distrustful woman!"

"You would rather have me away—go on, sir!"

"I would rather have the house empty a thousand times than put up with these moods," answered Zach. "I don't believe now that we were ever fitted for each other. You would be more happy by your mother's side than by mine—go there! Claim what income you like, and that I can afford, for the support of yourself and child, and let us afford to the world another instance of the mistakes ill-assorted people make in marrying together."

Zach scarcely meant what he said ; he thought that he was taking the most direct means to bring his wife to reason. But then he had never thoroughly understood his wife, and he was not at all prepared for her reply.

“ Very well. I will go to Wimbledon as soon as it is possible. If you do not ask me to remain here—if you retract not all your bitter words, by heaven ! I will go—believing that it is best for both of us.”

“ You are at perfect liberty to make your own choice,” said Zach ; “ doubtless the arrangement would prevent much quarrelling, and leave us both with more time to devote to our peculiar professions. Any arrangement that suits you will be perfectly satisfactory to me.”

“ Well, well, I have been waiting for this. It has only come a little sooner than I expected.”

She subsided into silence after this. Zach tried hard to master the money article, now the chance was afforded him ; and there were no more accusations or recriminations that night. He sat up all night apart from her, and went to business the next morning without seeing her. That would bring her to her senses, he thought—if not, why, perhaps separation between them would not be the worst thing that could ensue. He would give attention to it presently.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HENWOOD SETTLES ALL CLAIMS.

ZACH'S peculiar method of bringing his wife to her senses was not a success. Zach, in the few intervals allowed him for sober reflection, believed that it would result in success ; but there came an influx of business to both wharves, and he could not give that attention to the subject which its domestic importance deserved. He was, taking all things into consideration, somewhat glad of this ; it removed one little care from him, or, at least, relieved his mind of a certain amount of undue pressure. He combined application to business with an assertion of his dignity at home, by working early and late at his counting-house, and seeing little, if anything, of his wife.

He left his wife's thoughts to prey upon herself, believing that they would plead in his favour ; but they rose up against him, and made his latter actions wholly inexcusable. She had no faith in that business, and now, alas ! she had no faith in him. By every action of his life he demonstrated his want of love for her, and she became con-

vinced—thoroughly convinced—that a deed of separation between them was what he wished, and what would conduce alone to peace. She was sure of this on that night they quarrelled together; and to have kept to their separate rooms—their separate lives since—was but to strengthen her resolution, not to shake it. What might happen afterwards in her favour, God alone knew!—she would trust to time for happiness, with him or without him, but she would go away now. Her pride said “Go”—her new and strange interest in her mother impelled her—her resentment against her husband, who had so speedily tired of her, forced her onward in her foolish step.

Her mind was strongest when Zach thought that she was most wavering. She was packing up her things, and shedding a few secret tears over the end of her love-dream, and the earthliness of the idol that she had worshipped, when Zach went away by appointment a fortnight afterwards to meet his brother, Mrs. Henwood, and four solicitors, in a dingy and fusty room on the first-floor of a house of dreariness in Lincoln’s Inn.

Mrs. Henwood had kept her word, and lost no time. She had consulted her solicitor, and bade sundry deeds be prepared concerning a dissolution of partnership between her and her nephew; she had given instructions for further monetary arrangements, and had perplexed her lawyers—un-

impressionable people, too—with her motives for getting rid of so large a sum of money in so short a space of time. Attempts had been made to reason with her on the impropriety of her actions in this respect; but Mrs. Henwood was an obdurate woman, when it pleased her, the reader knows, and the solicitors succumbed, and thought that their client's conscience was seriously affected by "these Fernwells." Of course they knew all about the existence of these Fernwells, as well as Mrs. Henwood did, for family lawyers know almost everything.

The lawyers had been reasoning with her a few minutes before Zach's arrival—suggesting that a clearer exposition of the case might enable them to do more justice to their client.

"Justice has nothing to do with it," said Mrs. Henwood wearily. "I have to pay money away, and that is my business. You have written me a deed binding my two nephews to abstain from all further claims on my estate, and my heirs—that is your business."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now read that deed over to me before those—those young men come."

She was more anxious about her absolution from further claims, than of the debt of restitution which she had resolved to pay that day. It took a weight from her mind to pay that money; and

though it impoverished her more than she had anticipated—for she had been all her life an extravagant woman—still she was prepared, having no one to study but herself. But she must be free from all further claims—from a sight of those who had worked her so much mischief in their day—disgracing her name, killing her sister, robbing her of a daughter, of a partnership in her own firm, of the whole business together, and lastly of two-thirds of the money which she had received for the Warwickshire estates. What a mass of evil for one family to work upon another ! she thought ; and what a poor fool she had been to aid in her own humiliation by bringing a snake to her fireside to cherish ! It was her own fault ; she had brought it all on herself ; she had taken Martin Wynn's advice, and lo ! the result in that lawyer's dusty office that day !

The worst known, the worst prepared for, she was more like the Mrs. Henwood whom we have met at an earlier stage of this history. She was a woman who maintained her position again, and was proud and repellent—a something immeasurably above the Fernwells. She had thought long and bitterly upon them, it may be seen, and she had begun to think less of the harm that she had done to them. In the first impulse, after that dialogue with her son-in-law, wherein he had taunted her with the character

that she had made of him, she had been nearly heart-broken. That same day, in the rain, she had ordered her carriage to the door with the intention of seeing Martin Wynn, and telling him all her weakness and sorrow ; then, when she was ready, she had sent the equipage back again to the stables, and made up her mind to fight the battle alone. She could not face Martin Wynn any more ; she was ashamed to see him now ; she had asked him to marry her, and that was her last humiliation. She could not prostrate herself in the dust before him, and confess how weak she had been, and to what an end her weakness—and crime—had brought her. After that struggle she hardened a little, perhaps, for she was very much like her old self, ringlets and all, when Mr. Botchkin, senior partner of Botchkin and Dapple, Solicitors, to whom Mr. Tinchester had recommended her long ago, read slowly to her the deed he had prepared. He had finished, and Mrs. Henwood was becoming nervous at the delay, and wondering whether the brothers had altered their minds, and seen a better way of benefiting themselves and harassing her, when Zachary Fernwell was announced. A few minutes afterwards the elder brother, looking very pale and stern, followed in Zach's steps.

Teddy had brought his own solicitor—Zach was also accompanied by his confidential lawyer ; there

was quite a gathering of "birds of prey" in that room in Lincoln's Inn.

No greetings had been exchanged between aunt and nephews on this occasion—Teddy had hazarded a clumsy bow in her direction, but had been rewarded with a stare that had discomfited him. Mrs. Henwood had been great in looking people down, and trouble had not deprived her of all her accomplishments. She was resolved to shake off these Fernwells after this day; she had made up her mind to go abroad for good; she even thought very resentfully of her daughter with the rest now. Apart from the old world, she would begin life afresh, finding new and better friends in Paris. It was satisfactory to think that she could not meet with worse.

Teddy and his brother stood talking together whilst the four solicitors went over the various documents. Mrs. Henwood watched them furtively. She was not quite so strong-minded in their presence, for she felt that it was in their power yet to hold her up to publicity and shame, and she could not trust them even then. She noticed that the brothers seemed to differ on some points, although all had been arranged two weeks ago—that the elder one was even discontented, and seemed to argue with considerable warmth, growing more heated as his brother maintained a cold and equable demeanour. That elder Fernwell was an

awful man, she thought, with a shudder ; he was restless and insatiable ; he was as full of scheming as his father ; it was a dark, almost angry face, at which she glanced, and it boded no good to her, she was certain.

“I think that we are ready to settle this *mysterious* matter,” said Mr. Botchkin, with no little emphasis ; “you, Mr. Edward Fernwell, are to receive twenty thousand pounds for yourself—a like sum as executor to the will of Richard Fernwell. You, Mr. Zachary Fernwell, are to receive an assignment of the whole business of Henwood’s Wharves, for the sum of twenty thousand pounds, payable by you to Mrs. Henwood.”

“He pays me nothing!” exclaimed the lady.

“Pardon me, it is paying it in one sense,” explained Zachary’s solicitor, “and it renders the whole affair more completely a business transaction.”

“I understand, Go on,” was the peevish answer ; “settle this at once, and let me go away.”

The business proceeded rapidly after this ; the question of the dissolution of partnership was taken first ; the signatures were affixed ; the receipt for a visionary twenty thousand pounds was given ; and Zachary Fernwell stood sole possessor of Henwood’s Wharves at last. What a reward of merit ! —what a rise in the world ! Ten years ago,

and he was a boy receiving four shillings a week, and doing barge-work. So much for industry and perseverance, thought Zach, as he gave place to Teddy, after affixing his own name to a renunciation of all further claims on Mrs. Henwood's property for ever—a little stroke of business that Mr. Botchkin thought might as well be done at once.

Zach gave up his papers into Mrs. Henwood's possession, after conferring with his brother; and what those papers were, and whose interests they affected, Messrs. Botchkin and Dapple never knew,—and so never forgave Mrs. Henwood for concealing.

Teddy's case was proceeded with. Mrs. Henwood had a wild thought cross her that Teddy might be foiled even now, if she could destroy the papers placed in her possession, but it was a thought that left her speedily. She did not know the extent of her power, or what enemies she might make of those men, or how far the law would stand her friend. Above all, and this to Mrs. Henwood's credit—the last thought and the best—she knew that she had done wrong, and it was an act of honour to let that strange man have a share in his mother's birthright. But the struggle had been for the instant somewhat acute, and when they looked at Mrs. Henwood again she was deathly white, and panting very much.

Teddy went through the necessary formula, and

received twenty notes of a thousand pounds each, which Mrs. Henwood drew from a reticule that she had held tenaciously in her lap.

“I did not suppose that you would have trusted me with a cheque for the money,” she said sharply; “will you see that the notes are right.”

Teddy took them in his hands, and counted them very carefully. Surely his eyes began to sparkle as he looked at them; his chest heaved, and his whole face lighted up. She hated him the more for the exultation that it was not in his power to disguise.

Lastly there came the question of the late Mr. Richard Fernwell’s share, and who was entitled to it. Zach stopped her with alacrity.

“Clearly the sole executor in the first instance,” he said; “but we may as well settle everything according to the conditions of that will at once. There is no occasion——”

“To trust me with twenty thousand pounds,” concluded Teddy; “so much trust-money might turn my head, Zach, or bring back the old weakness.”

It was a queer jest, at which he recoiled himself the instant afterwards. The face, which the money had brightened, darkened very speedily. He passed the will to the council of four, and two out of the four exclaimed at once, “A codicil!”

“What is that you say?” rang out Zach’s voice.

.A suspicion of the truth—not the whole truth—flashed to his mind on the instant, and he turned at once upon his brother.

“Teddy—you have deceived me !”

“No—I hope not.”

“Not you, whom I have benefited so much—whom I have raised to greatness!” he cried out, forgetting the presence of the lawyers in the first sharp pang of the disappointment that he felt was coming.

“This is my father’s own actions, unprompted by me. He died in the attempt almost.”

“And you did not stop him writing that ?”

“No,” said Teddy quietly, “I assisted him.”

“Re—read that codicil, please,” said Zach in choking accents. He was enraged at his loss—trebly enraged at being over-reached. He had thought that he had planned wisely and well, and his first attempt at confidence in human kind had proved how treacherous everybody was.

The codicil was read. All Mr. Fernwell’s property, future reversions, everything left to the elder son, Edward Fernwell, of Upper Ground Street.

Zach clenched his hands, and muttered his curses on his dead father, and on the brother who had deceived him.

Teddy heard the latter, and turned to him at once.

"You are disappointed, Zach—I am sorry for it."

"I am disappointed in you," he cried; "a word from you would have stopped this at the last!"

"It might have done so—but I had my reason for not altering it. Will you stay to hear me?"

"No. I have no further need to remain here—I have no further trust in you."

He was moving towards the door, when Teddy intercepted him.

"One moment, Zach. Here is Mrs. Henwood—have you anything to say to her?"

"Nothing."

"Consider once more," he said; "you and she may never meet again, if she leaves England to-morrow."

"What have I to say?" demanded Zach; "do you think that it is my place to be liberal?—or that I am more disposed to listen to you, than I was before I understood your duplicity. Let me pass!"

"It is my place to be liberal, then. Wait for me in the street—I have more to say to you."

Zach looked in a bewildered manner at his brother, before he went away. His place to be liberal!—with the brother who had been cruelly disappointed—surely he meant that!

When he was gone, Teddy turned to his solicitor.

“Is there anything more to do here?” he asked.

“We have not completed the arrangements for the receipt of the second sum of twenty thousand pounds,” he said.

“Oh!—yes—I had forgotten.”

Mrs. Henwood dived into her bag again—Fortunatus’s bag that day, for it had held forty thousand pounds. The money was in Teddy’s hands an instant afterwards, twenty more crisp bank notes, which he received with the same evident relish. His hand trembled as he signed a receipt for the same; he was very flushed and excited, the lawyers noticed, as he bent over the table, but he was looking very happy too—as well he might, thought his solicitor, who had a bill for five hundred pounds coming due next month, and was doubtful if he should be able to meet it. A sharp snap to the clasp of Fortunatus’s reticule drew attention afresh to Mrs. Henwood. She had risen, and was moving to the door.

“One minute,” exclaimed Teddy; “I do not wish you to go yet.”

“I have paid all demands upon me,” she said, coldly; “what have I to stay for here? My solicitors will see to those papers for me.”

“Your pardon, but I wish that you should stay,” said Teddy; “it is important—it is very important.”

Mrs. Henwood’s face betrayed a little alarm

again. What was there else against her?—was it possible that there had risen up to confront her a something else?

“What do you want with me—now?”

“Shall I speak here? Perhaps it is best——”

“It concerns me?”

“Yes. And my brother Zach.”

Mrs. Henwood hesitated. Mr. Botchkin pointed with the feather of his pen to the side-door of an adjoining room.

“Here is my own small study, Mrs. Henwood, if Mr. Fernwell has anything very particular to communicate.”

“You will not go away from this room?” she asked, with a little alarm; “I cannot trust myself alone with this man if you leave here.”

“God bless me!” ejaculated Mr. Dapple, a more nervous man than his partner; “certainly we will remain. Can we send for—for anyone?”

“No. Wait here.”

Mrs. Henwood entered the room, and Teddy, still under suspicion—a man with forty thousand pounds in his pocket—followed her, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HERO OF THE STORY.

WHEN aunt and nephew were in that inner room, the nephew placed a chair for the aunt, which she declined at first.

“Mine is not a story told in a few words,” said Teddy, gently; “and you will pardon me, but you are very weak.”

The voice was soft and winning, and startled her. She sank into the chair, and then looked up at him, standing before her with that strange expression on his face, which she had noticed more than once that day. It had steeled her heart against him until then—even then, after the first thrill of a better feeling, the fear that he had reserved his last shaft of malice until that hour, oppressed her with a new weight.

“I ask you to spare me as much as you can,” she said, in tremulous accents; “I have paid enough for peace, I think,—for I am ruined.”

Her pride had vanished again, and the uncertainty of what was coming was troubling her self-possession.

“I will be as brief as I can,” said he in reply; “for I am going, in the first place, to speak of myself instead of my brother. It is an innovation, but I will ask you to excuse it.”

She inclined her head slightly. What did it all mean?—was she in his power still, or was she not?

“Mine has been an odd life,” continued Teddy; “I have been very lucky and unlucky—thought more generously of than I deserved, and as a make-weight, I suppose, now and then misunderstood. I have often wished for a chance of proving that I was not wholly selfish—a thoroughly good chance!—and I think,” he added with a laugh, “that it has come to-day.”

Mrs. Henwood looked up quickly. This commencement was new and unprepared for. It shadowed forth no further secrets, and yet it made her tremble, sitting there in the full light of those large dark eyes bent on her.

“No one,” he went on, “misunderstands a man or woman when money is in question. Money is a test of character—not the best test, perhaps—but still a fair one. It has tested you, and Zach, and me to-day. And this brings me round to myself again—the boy thief that you dreaded years ago?”

She shrank away from him for an instant, as though she dreaded him still.

“I was saved from evil—from destruction—by

one whom I think is the best man in the world!" said Teddy. "He gave me a good and plain education, at his own expense; he taught me what was right and what was wrong so well, that the past enormity of my boy's life has been for ever afterwards a something to appal me. He taught me how to be grateful for all good things, and I loved him very much."

"A good man—yes," said Mrs. Henwood.

"Well, madam, he has lost all hope in me—for my actions have been dark lately. I have been with my father, trying to show a son's duty to him, and in one way or another it has come to pass that I am entirely alone in the world. But I am very strong still," he said, drawing himself up to his full height, "and, to my own surprise, I was never happier than I am to-day."

"You have good reasons to feel happy," she answered.

"Ah! the money you mean," cried Teddy. "Yes, and it is of this money that I wish to speak, having given you a faint idea of my past life, and how an act of yours rescued me from it."

"Of mine?"

"The friend I once had," said Teddy, with a sigh, "was fond of tracing out cause and effect. I have been lately following his example. Your promise to take care of Zach, I find, was my salvation. It led me to try hard to get Zach into your

home ; it began with a lie, but it brought me face to face with Martin Wynn, and if—and if—it has done no good to Zach, still I believe that it has made me an honest man. But," with a second laugh, that had more embarrassment in it on the present occasion, "this does not prove that I am an unselfish man, at any rate. Let us get on."

He seemed in doubt how to proceed, however ; he betrayed more nervousness ; he looked wistfully at Mrs. Henwood ; he shuffled for an instant with one foot, till he gave a sudden stamp to it that startled Mrs. Henwood nearly out of her chair. After that he darted into his subject with fresh vigour.

"I was always a muff at explanations," he said. "I never could catch my dear master's way of explaining things in the best manner. And I want to explain—if I can—my thoughts of you ! There, I shall get on now—don't interrupt me, please," he added, detecting a restless movement in his listener. "I can speak to the end without a blunder, now. I have it all by heart, and if it all comes out simply and quietly, it is so much better than if I were on the stage ranting away about my sacrifices. It isn't a sacrifice—not in the least."

He fought for a fresh supply of breath, and then cut himself short in the pursuit thereof.

"Ah ! don't speak," he said, "or you'll throw me out for good. My opinion of you is, that you

are a good woman, and that if you were wrong—just a little wrong—in the last affair, it was in the belief that you were acting for the best, and keeping the money in the hands of those who knew best how to appreciate it. All that kind of thing, no doubt, and there's an end of it."

"Oh! yes—there's an end of it," was the dry remark here.

"Ah! you will interrupt! Well, what was I going to say?"

Teddy looked down again, reflected for an instant, and then sprang at his ideas, and took them forcibly by the throat.

"And Zach and I were hard upon you, considering what you had done for Zach—and *me*! Zach is fond of money, poor fellow, and can't have enough of it! I told him to-day that he did not deserve his rise in life, and that he was ungrateful."

"What could I expect in—"

"In a Fernwell—not much! But then you did not know *me*!"

Mrs. Henwood was taken aback by this naïve answer. Teddy repressed a smile with it, for he was drifting towards the business part of his discourse.

"You did not know *me*," he repeated; "and I have been grateful all my life to you for Zach's advancement—for I liked Zach very much *once*, and I regret that the good in him has vanished, God knows where! Yes," he added, more thoughtfully,

“I think that I was grateful to you for Zach’s preferment, at all events—don’t laugh—I taught myself to pray for you, and for a chance, only one, to show that we Fernwells were not all so wrapped up in ourselves as to turn upon our benefactors. The chance came to my brother, and he missed it. I am very thankful, very, very happy, that it has come to me!”

“I—I do not understand!”

“No, madam, nor I don’t want you—that is, I don’t want you to understand everything—all my bitter disappointment in a brother of whom I am verily ashamed, and who has become my last trouble to me. But I wish you to know that I thank you with all my soul for him—for all the better life that came to me by your act, and that it is not Teddy Fernwell who lays a greedy hand upon your money!”

She was not looking up as he spoke, and she was not prepared for the fortune that fell into her lap, that had been plucked in its entirety from the breast-pocket of the speaker’s coat, and cast back to her possession. She was thunderstruck; she did not know what to say or do; the tears were running down her cheeks, and she could not stop them; she wanted to speak, but her voice had wholly left her.

“There, I am going now,” said Teddy, “but don’t let me leave you with a false impression. I

never intended for an instant to take a penny of this money, whether mine by law or not. I have money of my own—more than meets my wants ; and I shall never—never in all my life, madam—have anyone to think of save myself. So it doesn't matter, you see ! You would be poor without it—poor by comparison, I know, for I have made every inquiry, in every way, concerning you that I could ; and you are a woman whose pride would suffer very much, and suffer unjustly. Had your father lived, he would have destroyed that deed, I am sure. There, it is all plain and clear enough, and I think that I may go."

" You—you of all men to give up this money ! I can't take it now ; I am poorer—much poorer than I fancied—but I can't take it ALL."

" I would rather drop down dead here than receive any of it back from you !" cried Teddy, with vehemence. " Madam, I should go back to evil with it, and be lost. There, that is rather stagey," he said, assuming suddenly a cooler demeanour, " and it don't suit me. I am going to ask one question."

" Well ?"

" Will you think better of me than you have done ?"

" God bless you ! It is all strange, and like a book."

“And I the hero of it—ha! ha!—well, the position has cost money. There, don’t blush, that was not a spasm of regret at my sacrifice which led me to say that. Now, I am going, *aunt*, to kiss you. If you don’t like it, scream out, and let us have a fight with the lawyers.”

He took her in his arms, and kissed her, she crying still, and putting her arms round his neck, as she had never thought of doing in all her life till then.

“We must not have you full of trouble in your old age, *aunt*,” he said, as he released her; “we will do our best to help you.”

“I’m—I’m not so very old,” whimpered Mrs. Henwood, resisting that imputation to the last.

“No—but you will be, fifty or sixty years hence, you know,” Teddy corrected; “and you are a woman of position, who requires money, though I wouldn’t think so much of it as I used, if I were you. Good-bye.”

He went hastily from the room, and through the lawyers’ office downstairs into the street. His face took a deeper shade as he descended, and there was much pain therein along with the new thoughts that met him in the brighter light.

“Now—*Zach!*” he said.

CHAPTER V.

TEDDY SPEAKS HIS MIND TO HIS BROTHER.

ZACH had waited patiently for his brother in Lincoln's Inn. Time was valuable with the responsibility of a business wholly on his shoulders, but Teddy had asked him to wait, and though the request had been made somewhat peremptorily, still he lingered there, waiting for the end of the mystery.

How it would end, he could almost believe, having had experience already in the eccentricity of his brother; but he hoped against his own convictions, for he could not estimate his brother's unselfishness at the high price of forty thousand pounds. It was not natural—it was not likely—above all, it was very unlike a Fernwell. His brother might offer back a portion of the money—Teddy was foolish enough, perhaps, though he had over-reached his own flesh and blood—but he would also offer him something as compensation for his own cruel disappointment. That would be like Teddy, for he was a generous fellow in his way. And if his father had added that codicil of his

own free will, why, Teddy would probably see the justice of making restitution.

As he walked up and down, Zach began to ponder on what he should take, and how much of his father's money he should object to take, out of delicacy to the feelings of the hero. He was pondering thus when Teddy came upon him.

"This is a quiet place, Zach," he said, "let us take the other side of the square for a few minutes, and we shall not meet Mrs. Henwood or our lawyers again. I have a little to say to you."

They took the opposite side of the square after this, and walked up and down once before they spoke. Teddy was evidently troubled, and taking even more time than usual to collect his thoughts.

He was the first to speak.

"I am sorry, Zach, that you did not express some regrets to Mrs. Henwood at the dissolution of partnership between you."

"Why should I play the hypocrite? I do not regret it."

"I am more sorry that you did not decline her share of the business, and express your willingness to work for her benefit as you have done, forgetting the claim which we made upon her in our cupidity."

"It was a just claim—it was our mother's birth-right!" said Zach, sharply.

"The deed was not intended to see the light—

it was in abeyance—its concealment is a proof of that. But of that no matter. I am speaking of Mrs. Henwood."

"Well?"

"I have given up my claim to any part of her money," said Teddy. "I have returned to her all that fell to my share, by that deed, and by our father's will. Thank God that I am no richer man than when I entered that lawyer's office this afternoon!"

"You have never acted so like a madman!—sacrificing for a fool's idea of gratitude the only chance that you will ever have of riches! Calmly and deliberately, you do not mean to tell me that you have given up the sum of forty thousand pounds?"

"Every penny of it—for every penny would have been a weight upon my soul!"

"You have acted like a fool—and she will think you a fool too! No one will believe it!"

"I shall not test any one's belief, for I shall not relate the story," said Teddy.

"Why go through all these forms of law, to act in this mad fashion?"

"Because," answered Teddy, more gravely, "I could not trust my brother to do his benefactress justice."

"Benefactress!" was the scornful cry of Zachary Fernwell.

“She put you in bad hands, and they trained you to revere the world, and struggle for position in it—but she did her best according to her judgment. She spent her substance on you ; she raised you from a low estate, and put her trust in you ; she saved you from the streets when you had not strength of will to save yourself ; and so—your benefactress !”

“She hated me from the first day that I went into her house. She took me out of vanity—in an eccentric hour, that she wished had never come to her. I am not grateful for such charity as that.”

“Nor to one who rewards it instead of yourself.”

“You have cut your own throat,” was the harsh reply.

“Think so, if it please you. Now listen to a prophecy that was uttered by a better man than you or I will ever be.”

“Martin Wynn, of course ?”

“Yes. Don’t sneer at him, Zach, till you and I are apart, for I will not stand that, even from you.”

“I wish him no harm,” answered Zach, who relented a little at his brother’s earnestness. He was terribly vexed with this brother for his unnecessary sacrifice, but he was always affected in some way or other in his presence. It was very strange !

“He judged your character correctly, Zach, long before I did. He saw what you would become, and what I should think of you. He told me that I should live to be ashamed of you—I am!”

“I protest not against it,” said Zach, with a lowering brow; “you are welcome to your opinion. I shall never try to change it.”

“Heartily ashamed,” continued Teddy, “of one who has set so close to his heart all that chokes up the heart’s best feelings. You are a rich man, and I a poor one—you have many chances of happiness, and I not one—but I would not change places with you for a hundred times the money you have haggled for to-day.”

“I do not profess to understand this exhibition of virtuous indignation,” retorted Zach. “I am a man of the world, and the sublimities of life are far above my reach and comprehension.”

“I don’t know whether we shall ever meet again,” said Teddy, mournfully, “but at least we are more apart from this day. I shall never move one step towards you any more—and the next meeting must surely be of the rich man’s seeking.”

“I shall not seek you,” muttered Zach.

“And seeking me, he must come a more humble, chastened, and grateful man to my home, before I shall be glad to see him.”

He turned to leave his brother, paused, and then came back again.

“ You will never try to change my opinion of you,” said Teddy, quoting Zach’s past words, “ for you are content with your own opinion of yourself. It may last your life, or it may not. Whilst that lasts—I blush for you.”

Teddy pulled his hat further over his brow, and strode away. He went at once out of the square, leaving Zach to ruminate upon his words, or to laugh them away, as the mood suited him.

Zach tried to laugh them away, but the laugh did not rise readily to his lips, though he had been very fortunate in business that afternoon, and his brother had acted like a madman. He ruminated upon them instead, and walked towards his wharf—his City wharf—turning them over in his mind, and thinking that this brother of his was very eccentric and unfathomable. Strange, that his life should have been cast amidst such odd people, whose feelings were not to be measured by the square and rule.

He would have done a great deal for that brother—he had done so, he thought, and it was folly for Teddy to turn against the hand that would have raised him, and rave about his blushes and his shame. Then he thought of him in the early days, of Teddy in the later time, offering to share his life with him and hopeful in him to the last, and he could see that that brother had ever been wonderfully prone to set aside himself and help

another. In a short while Zach felt low-spirited, but when he was in the thick of the crowd in the streets, and men hustled him in their progress, he went back again to the world wherein he had to live, and set Teddy from his thoughts.

He was getting rich ; there was fair sailing on the deep waters for him and his ; he could not idle time in dwelling on the actions of other folk. For him and *his* ! Well, he had only his wife, and a child of a few weeks old—and the wife had talked nonsense about a separation from him. They were not interested in his career, but they did not bar his way to greatness, and he would work for them and himself. He was as happy as he had ever expected to be in business pursuits ; he would make his happiness at his warehouses, whatever else failed him. His was a life apart from romance and poetry, but it was a life that the world should respect ; he swore it to himself as he went along. Before him a prosperous career—everything in his own hands now—and no fine feelings about gratitude to hold him down, or render him the slave of an idea. What did it matter if his brother were ashamed of him ; had he not been ashamed of Teddy, and held himself aloof from him ?

He found Mr. Tinchester waiting for him in the office at the wharf near London Bridge—waiting impatiently, and with no small degree of nervousness.

“Oh! Mr. Zachary, is it true that there has been a dissolution of partnership between Mrs. Henwood and you?”

“Good news and ill news fly apace,” responded Zach. “Yes, it is true enough.”

“Dear me!—dear me! And you remain the master of all this?”

“Yes.”

“Then I need not stand upon ceremony with you, sir,” said he. “I’ve been tired of this work some time—I’ve saved a little money, and I want a little rest in the country, before the trouble of the whole thing takes away my senses. I shall leave next quarter, Mr. Zachary.”

Zachary was vexed. He knew the value of the old and faithful servant, and he knew no one to replace him.

“You will think better of it,” he said. “I intend an increase of pay to the best of my staff—I cannot afford to lose you, Mr. Tinchester.”

“Oh! sir, you are very kind, but I have had enough of business life,” was the reply, “and I am a man easily contented. I was foolish enough to think once that Mrs. Henwood would—would have made a partner of me, but when I knew that that day would never come, I worked just as well, and as hard, by way of return for all her confidence. But it has told upon me very much—for it is a terrible business—and I can’t stand it any

longer. It don't look so ungrateful in me to leave you as it would have done to leave her, when she had these two big places on her mind."

Ungrateful! Even this old man talked of gratitude, and he had grown grey and husky in City service.

"We will talk of this another time, Mr. Winchester," said Zach. Then he went into his private room, and turned the key upon all the vexation that he felt.

He went away homewards two hours afterwards, with an extra degree of shadow on that face already care-worn with the responsibility of wealth.

CHAPTER VI.

WEARING OUT.

ZACH returned home that night in a thoughtful and unamiable mood—like a man who needed consolation, rather than a lucky fellow who had become sole principal of a great firm. With his rise to greatness—within an hour of his success—his brother had discarded him, and the man who seemed almost necessary to his business had asserted that he should leave next quarter. Neither of these events should have affected him a great deal ; his brother and he had ever been apart, and what that brother thought of him did not make much difference ; and his manager, though a shrewd man enough, could easily be replaced whilst good salaries were paid at Henwood's. Still he was worried ; it had been a day of unrest, and he remembered for the first time that he had not dined when he found his dinner awaiting him at Stamford Hill.

He remembered also that he was not on good terms with his wife, when Lettice appeared not at dinner, and he speculated as to what had become of her, and then why he had no appetite between the

courses that he made an effort to struggle through with. This should have been a festal day, had all things gone well, and the dissolution of partnership have been an amiable affair; but he confessed at last that it was all very dreary—that he was surrounded by the dullest element that had ever depressed a man whose fortunes had changed for the better.

Zach lost his temper, and when Lettice finally entered—rigid and stately, after her new manner—he attacked her with his bitterest reproaches, and his crudest sarcasms at the opposition which she had steadily maintained towards him. Lettice thought that she had made up her mind already to leave him; she had sworn by Heaven that she would not remain in his house, if he acted unfairly to her mother, and this was the last feather that weighed against the little chance of happiness they might have had. We have not space to particularize this quarrel between man and wife, and it would be unnecessary to the final working of our story. Suffice it to say that it was the fiercest and the worst of quarrels, and that it ended in two stubborn natures resolving that a separation was really better for them both. It had been talked of before; it had been threatened by one, and contemptuously assented to by another; but here on this evening the quarrel ended in a cool, hard, business-like arrangement of terms,

and a future appointment at a solicitor's office.

It was all settled, and neither Zach nor Lettice was likely to give way now. Each had become impressed with the conviction that it was surely for the best that they should part; if she wished it, thought Zach, why, he was too proud a man to ask her to stay, or to believe that any good could result from her remaining; and if *he* wished it, thought Lettice, why, it was plain enough that he had never loved her, and that having gained his object with the business, it would be but a mockery to live with him. Let her go to her mother, and try in that way to do her duty—the one subject of contention between them at least no longer existed.

So in a quiet way, without any “scene,” unshadowed by further reproaches, husband and wife were put asunder by their own hard wills. Zach agreed to allow Lettice a fair sum of money as an annual income, to allow her the custody of the baby girl as long as she wished—for ever, if she liked!—and Lettice covenanted, or rather her trustees, the family solicitors again, covenanted to indemnify the husband against the wife's debts, that wife who surrendered, there and at that period, all claims to “jointure, dower, or thirds.”

All this a formal and matter of fact piece of business, but none the less heartrending for it. Lettice wavered, even Zach wavered, over the parchment folios and government stamps; it was a

death-blow to the romance of the thing, to all the past trust that they had had in each other. But the deed was signed and sealed, and Lettice and Zach parted in that lawyer's office—the former starting at once for Paris with her child, in search of the mother; the latter going back to his empty villa, to see how he should like it all to himself.

“Only myself to care for!” he might have cried with his brother in Upper Ground Street; and surely with himself only to please, there was little doubt of peace. It was somewhat of a novel sensation at first to feel so entirely his own master; but he never could shake off altogether the sense of loneliness that met him after office hours in that house—where everything reminded him of her who had deserted him. He regarded Lettice always in that light now; he gave her all the blame, and set her down as the wife who had deserted *him!* She was to be answerable for all the harm that followed the disruption, for she had not been true to the vows spoken at the altar. He was very much annoyed with himself that he missed her; he had married her for money,—that was true enough in most respects,—but it forced itself upon him that he missed her, and he could remember, in these lonely days that had come to him, that she *had* loved him once, and that, with all her eccentricity, he had thought that she was a woman really suited for him.

But he set her very much apart from him, by hard study of his wrongs, by her attack on his principles, and her foolish defence of her mother ; she had grievously offended him, and he disliked all thoughts that tended to any softer recollections. He studied to forget her, and possibly he succeeded. As time went on, he felt less irritable and restless ; he plunged with more vigour into his business, and he made his business life answer for home, and wife, and child. He worked harder than ever, and became more stern and hard in consequence ; the difficulties that met him by the way relieved his mind from other cares ; he submerged himself in trade, and by careful speculations and contracts of magnitude, the money in his hands made more money in its turn, and the golden harvest brought its consolation to him.

Three months after the parting with his wife—in the rude March weather, that interfered with Zach's contracts a little, for it delayed the ships and barges that belonged to him—Mr. Tinchester made his bow, and took down his hat from behind the office door for the last time.

Zach had made use of every argument to induce the old servant to remain, but Mr. Tinchester, though he parted not in enmity, remained exceedingly firm, even to an offer of an increase of wages.

“ It isn't the money that I care about,” he said ;

“ it is the rest I want. I should not like to die here, and as I have saved quite enough to take care of myself, I really do not see the necessity of remaining any longer. I am getting old, sir, and you'll find many better than I now. Best wishes for the continued prosperity of Henwood's Wharves, Mr. Zachary.”

Mr. Tinchester departed, but Zachary never found the better man to replace him. His deputy managers became a great trouble after this, and one succeeded another, each adding to the vexation of the master. He found men who were very clever, but exceedingly dishonest ; he found honest people who were dull as lead, and dribbled at the mouth when driving bargains ; he found respectable mediocrity, that took no interest in the business for itself, but was partial to punctual payments of its salary ; he found careless managers, who let him in for losses caused by their own imprudence or forgetfulness ; he found careful men who were so exceedingly punctilious, that they offended the best supporters of the business by their want of trust in them. Zach advertised extensively for the right man ; offered large salaries ; wasted time in searching for him ; but he never came. A second Mr. Tinchester, by some cruel mischance, never took the onus of responsibility off the young master's shoulders, and Zach worked for the new manager as well as himself through the

spring, summer, and autumn, till the winter came again.

All that long year he took not a day's rest, an hour's holiday; it was not safe, he thought, and he knew that it would lose him a portion of that money which had become still more dear to him with his intense pursuit. He was looking very ill, everybody told him who had time to take stock of his looks; he even began to fancy, as he hurried over his shaving in the early morning, that he detected an extra thinness in his visage, and a shade or two more sallowness in his complexion. There had been a time when he was young and foolish, wherein he had been conscious that he was a handsome man, that he possessed a face so striking and intense in its expression—its intellectuality—that men and women singled him from the crowd, and asked each other who he was.

But he had outgrown any vanity that he might have had concerning his good looks, and it did not give him much pain to be told that he was losing them, and becoming very worn. His father had been a very handsome man, he had heard, and had lost his good looks early also—it was in the family, this rapid decadence of the exterior surface; why should he care whilst he felt well, and made money?—the world would value him much more for his riches, than for a face like a woman's. If he carried on that face but one expression now—an

eager craving look for profit; if his eyes only lighted up at the gold and notes that fell in a fair shower about him, what mattered it? He was proud of his character; he had a name in the City for shrewdness, for ability in money-getting, for care in investing his money after he had got it, and such a character found its way to man's respect.

Let him become thin and sallow till the minimum was reached, and he should stop and harden, or dry up. He was very well in health, and nothing seemed to bore him or retard his progress to prosperity. If he were only less perplexed by his manager, and his clerks—if that old fool of a Tinchester had not been so readily content with his paltry savings!

Very well in health still, he considered, when his dinners became objectionable things to place before him, and he woke up regularly with no appetite for breakfast. He had never found time for regular meals in business hours; he had dined in town, taking his dinner when he could—and when he could not, missing it—and this erratic style of meal-snatching told upon him suddenly, and robbed him of the little zest for food that he had ever had. This was the first check to him, and made him thoughtful; but he found, or believed that he had found, that it made no difference whether he ate or not, and that being the case, why should he pay any attention to *that*? It had

always struck him that a man could subsist on a very little ; perhaps he had learned the trick when he was a boy on tramp with his mother, and a penny loaf would last them both four-and-twenty hours in hard times ; at all events, none the worse for lack of appetite—occasionally annoyed when he tried to eat and failed, and more annoyed to think that he had to pay the waiter all the same.

None the worse till in getting out of bed one winter's morning before the daylight had come—he was anxious that day to be down at his wharf by half-past five o'clock—his knees suddenly gave way under him, and he fell. Simply an accident, thought Zach, as he picked himself up, and resumed his toilette ; but he could not shake off the impression that he staggered a little all that day ; and when he found himself once more on his knees before the week was out—the oddest position in the world was Zach Fernwell on his knees, too !—he began to consider that something must be a little wrong with the machinery of his system.

He could not believe that he was going to be ill—that was not likely. He had not eaten enough, after all, and this was the natural result ; he remembered that when he was on tramp, he used to double up in this awkward and unbecoming manner. He cursed his memory the instant

afterwards that would go back to the days of that disgrace—he could not understand why he should dwell upon them always when he was a little “out of sorts.”

At business, at Henwood’s, he discovered himself suddenly holding on by his desk, to keep himself upon his leathern chair; and when the room had ceased spinning round with him, he had some trouble to apply himself to the letter that he was writing.

“This must be looked to,” he thought at last—“if it keep on, it must be looked to.”

It kept on, and one day Zach drove off in a Hansom cab to the first physician in the metropolis. He would have the best advice that money would purchase, at any rate; he never dealt in shabby material, and the best of everything lasted the longest, he knew by experience. He should obtain the best prescription here, though he thought, with a sigh, that he should have to pay more than a guinea for it.

Zach submitted himself to the examination of “the greatest man in the faculty,” keeping his glittering eyes on the man, meanwhile, and trying to read what he thought of him. Zach had answered many questions about his business, and his application thereto; he had impressed upon the doctor’s mind the necessity of his keeping to work, lest any foolish scheme for change of air

should be submitted to him; he wanted very good advice, but it must not interfere with the wharves.

“Your energy, and your incessant application, have been too much for your *physique*—you are rapidly wearing yourself out,” was the verdict given.

“I must take it more easy, then?” suggested Zach.

“You must give it up altogether for a while,” was the reply—“shake it entirely from your mind, as though it did not exist.”

As though it did not exist!—give it up altogether! thought Zach.

“Sir, that is impossible,” he said.

The physician reminded him of his critical state, and that it was dangerous to continue. This sense of weakness might pass away, but it would return again if he took no rest, and worked too hard. It might be the death of him.

“I can’t leave,” said Zach.

The physician was interested in this young man’s love for his trade, and he took time in treating the matter in a friendly light. He spoke of Zach’s friends as though their name was legion, and bade him trust in them, and leave all to them, till his health was sufficiently restored to take his place again at the head of affairs. Zach listened patiently.

“I am aware that no business succeeds so well in the absence of its principal,” said the doctor, in conclusion ; “but you must remember that a loss of money is always better than a loss of health, be the loss great or little.”

Zach paid his fee, and took his departure. What was to be done now ? he thought—what could he do after such preposterous advice ? Trust to his friends !—he, who had not a friend in all the world, and who did not know two persons fitted for his trade, who had been twelve months waiting for *one* !

He called at a chemist’s in his route, and had the prescription made up, taking his medicine on his way home in his cab, as though it were an *elixir vitae*, that would give him back his own old strength. He did not return to business all that day ; he would take a whole day’s rest, and proceed home at once. That would be giving the advice for which he had paid heavily, a very fair trial, he considered.

He was worse the next day, and began to think that the physician had been mistaken in his case, and recommended him an abominable mixture wholly inapplicable to his condition ; or else the chemist was a fool, and had made up the mixture, incorrectly. He would stay at home one more day, and have the medicine compounded afresh at the chemist’s in his neighbourhood ; and when

that was done, he sat shivering before the fire, comparing the two bottles of tonic, and fancying that he saw a difference between them, thereby assuring himself that one or another was improperly concocted.

There were troubles in the house that day—quarrelling amongst the servants, and missing rate-papers, which the housekeeper had not filed, and for the amount of which the collector called on that identical day again, when he was trying the specific of rest. Then a wretch, suave and well-dressed, sent in a card, and obtained admittance to him, only to solicit his subscription towards a testimonial to the clergyman of the district—a man on whom he had never set eyes in his life. In the afternoon the kitchen chimney caught fire, and the sweep and the man with the parish engine arrived at the same time, with two hundred boys behind them, and fought for precedence on the door-step ; and when all was peace, and he was dozing in his chair, he was aroused for good by the braying of a formidable volunteer band, marching at the head of its indefatigable corp—the 44th Tottenham Defencibles.

Zach thought that it was the house that added to the extra weight of responsibility upon him—it was a bright idea, that gave him ease. All this time he was managing that large house as well as

his business, and he suddenly remembered that it had always been a trial to him. The servants were a nuisance, and the establishment was not a necessity. Still he had an objection—he could not tell wherefore—to break up his home, and go into lodgings, and that objection was strongest upon him that day when the place had worried him so much. It was like home—a shadowy semblance of home—and he could not shun it altogether. He would find some one to take the sole management, and not disturb him with the details. He went to bed full of this plan; he rose full of it also. His mind had reverted to Mrs. Evvers, his former landlady, and Arabella, her daughter; he remembered that they had made him very comfortable in their lodging-house, and he believed that they would come and take care of his establishment, if they were living still.

That would be one weight removed from his mind, he considered, as he went to business that day. Business had been going on badly in his absence, of course; orders neglected, things commissioned to be done still remaining undone, letters unanswered, and the manager nowhere. He felt better putting things to rights, it revived his energy till the afternoon, and then there he was holding on to the desk again, and anathematizing his giddiness. He would try complete change now—a week's change altogether. The affairs at Hen-

wood's could not go irreparably wrong in a week. He left with that resolution, telling the sub-manager that he should be away a day or two at the furthest, and then took a cab to Mrs. Evvers's, New Kent Road, to settle that little matter of his house.

Arabella opened the door to him—the Evvers' were doing badly, and had discharged their servant for good; the lodgings were empty, and the house stood disconsolate. Zach's faculty for observation told him this at once.

Arabella looked at him in ignorance for a moment, then screamed, and fell against the passage wall.

“Oh! dear, to think it should be you! How you've altered! How *dreadful* white you are!”

Arabella had altered too, for the matter of that; she had become more thin, and lost a little of her bloom, like a girl harassed by a sharp mother, and by thoughts of keeping single all her life. But she had not changed like Zach.

“I have come to my old friends to help me in a dilemma,” said he. “I hope they will.”

“I'm sure they will, sir,” answered the girl, whose heart was touched at her old flame's general appearance.

Arabella was right. Mrs. Evvers was ready to assist for a fair consideration. Arabella could mind the house in the New Kent Road, and should things get brisker there, why, there was an aunt

round a back street who could step to the rescue. That matter was arranged, then, and Zach gave a shadowy outline of his present position and future intentions before he went away.

Mrs. Henwood, his wife that is, was away, travelling for her health, and the house was a trouble to him. His health had been a little impaired, and he was going away in search of change for a week himself. Mrs. Evvers must return with him, and assume authority that very night.

“La! how well I remember your going away for the benefit of your health three years or so ago,” cried Arabella; and then she blushed very much at the speech, and wished that she had not said it. For three years ago she had made a hero from this unheroic material.

Zach took Mrs. Evvers home, and left for Yarmouth the next day. He remembered that he had found benefit in that place before—and though it was winter time now, when the air was a trifle too keen to be enjoyable, still he went away very sanguine as to the good results to be obtained by change of scene.

Taking his business into consideration, the holiday would cost him more than it would cost any man living, perhaps; hundreds of pounds might pass from his hands whilst he was away; but he was weak and ill, and it would be worth all the money, he confessed, to feel as strong as ever!

CHAPTER VII.

TRYING TO GET WELL.

WAS this the first time in Zach's life that he had shown any instance of gratitude? Yarmouth had restored him to health three years ago, and he was grateful enough to return to it, and patronize the town. A little gratitude, and a great deal of the instinct for self-preservation, placed him on the Norfolk Sands again, and faced him with the fierce sea breeze.

It was very cold and very boisterous weather for the health-seekers, and all the pleasure-swallows had flitted away in the beginning of last September. Zach found it dull and miserable enough, crawling about lonely parades with a London business on his mind ; but he remained his week there, and felt all the better and the stronger for it. How that week was passed he never knew ; how it had been possible to spend it, staring at the angry sea, talking to wooden-visaged beachmen, struggling with the wind at the corners of streets, he could never call to mind when he was at home again. He had seen the physician half an hour before he took his train at

Shoreditch Station, and he had been enjoined to set his business away from him and his thoughts, and though he had failed in the effort, still he had tried very hard.

The effort had done him no harm, and in the long evenings in his furnished lodgings he tried to read, and, failing to discover any amusement in his books, he would think for a while of his wife, his brother, Mrs. Henwood, Martin Wynn, and of others who had left a less indelible impress. He liked to think of them all in the time when they looked kindly at him; it was a liking to be preferred to that lonely room, with the wind rustling every window in its sash, and his sense of desolation complete and heart-chilling, and he passed from his business for a while to the old days. Then the quarrels, separations, distrusts, followed the better thoughts, and it became a wiser plan to dwell upon his business and chase them away—not completely, for there would return strange speculations as to what they were all doing now apart from him—whether his wife was *very* happy with her mother, how big his child had grown, and what had become of an unselfish brother? He dreamed of his wife and brother frequently during that week; once he woke up in the night so certain that Teddy had called to him from without there on the landing-place, that he sat up in bed to listen.

At the end of the week he was better and stronger then, but beset by an anxious craving to give himself no longer holiday—to get back to that life from which to stand apart was to feel like a man cutoff from the world. He was well enough now—change had done him all the good that had been prophesied—only the prophets, over-wise or over-careful, had spoken of rest for months and years, as though time and money were nothing to the sick man.

At the end of the week then Zach was back again in London streets. He had read his lesson, and had resolved to take more care after this; not to sacrifice himself to his business, but to let even a few pounds flit by him without making unheard of efforts to secure them. For ever after this warning, a man to be more careful!

He had returned home just in time, he discovered; the clerks were robbing him; the general manager was a fool or a knave, it was doubtful which at present; no one had been particularly interested at the wharves during his absence, and so money had been lost, and business neglected, as he had imagined that it would be. He took his losses philosophically for once; and he did his best to obviate any in future. He went carefully at his books for the first few weeks; he tried regularity of diet, by way of a change; he sat not up late at night studying the contracts, and he was better—almost as well as ever, he thought!

It was that house that had been upon his mind, he was sure. All those servants that robbed him and fought amongst themselves for the spoil; all the petty vexations of an establishment left without a mistress. *That* was off his mind, and he could apply himself to his own legitimate work at last; Mrs. Evvers once entered his room with a protest against the insubordination of her officials in authority under her, and Zach had stopped "that nonsense" immediately. Mrs. Evvers had power to give them warning, send them out of the house at a moment's notice, replace them by those more civil, if she were lucky enough to find them; he would not listen to complaints which her absolute power could readily redress.

This house of his reminded him very much of the old days when he was equally ambitious, but not so fortunate. He had had no worry of house-keeping then; he had had his mild excitements, his room to himself, and Arabella to flirt with occasionally—all those desiderata might be coming back again.

Arabella had come back, if not to flirt with him, at least to cross his path, and talk to him occasionally. There were many excuses, if she wanted any, to come to Stamford Hill, and there was an aunt to mind the house in the New Kent Road whilst she was absent. Surely it was natural that she should like to see her mother now and then.

That mother and she had gathered from one source and another many fragments of Zach's history, magnified, after the manner of fragments picked up on basement floors, into a history that resembled the truth in certain particulars, and yet was a burlesque of reality. They knew that Zach and his wife had quarrelled and separated, and as the wife had left the house to the husband, and was no longer heard of, she was in fault, of course, and there would follow presently a divorce, and Zach's freedom. It was possible that the "law's delay" was preying on "Mr. Zachary's" health, and Mrs. Evvers pondered over the possibilities of life, and thought how strangely things might come round after all !

Arabella scarcely knew what to think. She would let things take their course, and not interfere too much herself. She had been always fond of Zachary, and if Zachary were to be believed, he had been always very fond of her ; her one little romance to brighten the crudities of lodging-house keeping had been this slightly-made being into whose presence circumstances had once more thrust her. Arabella was a girl who solaced her leisure with much novel reading ; moreover, she was an ambitious girl, and love and ambition went together in this instance, and revived in the woman the past and rash fancy of the girl.

Still, let it be said to her credit here, that she

entered into no deliberate scheme to win Zach's regard—that she was even doubtful of the story, or some parts of the story, which had separated the husband from the wife. She was a woman on guard in many respects, but she took no pains to keep out of Zach's way, and took a great deal of pains to look her best when she drifted into it. A woman not likely to come to any harm, but still one who might go too far in her thoughts of the old lover, and lay the foundation of much future unhappiness.

Zach was pleased to see her in the house, for it helped the old times nearer to him, be it again recorded. He was glad of the excuses that brought her before him, that kept her in conversation with him about the days that had been, and he thought, or the devil whispered to him, that she was still very pretty, vain, and weak.

This was the mild excitement to which we have already drawn attention, and he wanted excitement after business hours—the pleasure even of fanning the vanity or hopes of Arabella Evvers. Still, he meant no harm to her, and he often contrasted her ignorance, her childishness, with the stately woman who had defiantly passed away from his home, and who could have made that home so happy.

The winter was verging on to the spring again; he had been in London about three months,

and had only felt a slight weakness at times—nothing more. He thought of the folly it would have been to take that old physician's advice *in toto*, and keep entirely from business. He thought that it was very easy to advise, and take five guineas for every scrap of information ; but if anyone had advised that doctor to leave off advising, and pocketing his heavy fees for twelve months or two years, what would he have done in his turn ? Why, remained at home, and grown more rich with other folk, industrious and saving like himself.

Congratulating himself on feeling better, then, and working almost as hard in pursuit of riches, when his manager—about the tenth who had stepped into Mr. Tinchester's shoes, and found them an exceedingly bad fit—resigned, and went abroad. Extra work for a few weeks for Zach, but, luckily, so much more like his usual self, that he could bear the strain of it. He set to work with all his might to replace the vacancy, and fulfil the duties of his manager as well as his own ; he slaved by night and day ; he oscillated between one wharf and another, glancing up at the old home in Upper Ground Street when there *was* a minute to spare in transit ; he left off his new and wise habit of taking his meals regularly ; he ran after those who seemed suitable for the post he wished to fill ; he held fifty interviews a day with

gentlemen who responded to his advertisement, and there began to steal upon his face that worn expression, which presaged so much.

“Oh! dear, Mr. Henwood!” exclaimed Arabella, meeting him at the door one of these late nights, when she was hastening away to secure the last omnibus homewards—“how bad you are beginning to look again! I hope you’re taking care.”

“I hope I am, Arabella,” he said, laughing; “I will try not to frighten you so much next time I come home. You are going away early?”

“No—it is very late.”

“I have not had much fresh air to-day,” he said; “may I see you to the omnibus?”

“I don’t know,” she said, blushing, and hesitating—“I don’t think it is right. I don’t know what mother will say.”

“Oh! bother the mother!” cried Zach—“I shan’t eat you up going along!”

He turned, and went back with Arabella. He was in good spirits that day, and did not feel ill in the least, despite his bad looks. He had made a thousand pounds at one sweep by a rise in banking shares, and he was excited, and inclined to be extravagant in his conduct. He fell back, as it were, that night into his old position as regarded Arabella Evvers, and she, keeping one eye open—the weather eye, we believe, it is called—suffered

him to do so, thinking of his future freedom, and loving him in her heart almost at that time as much as ever. It was a pleasant bit of flirtation, if scarcely a discreet one, or fair to Lettice Henwood, and Zach, in his high spirits, would have kissed her before they turned the corner where the omnibus was waiting, had not Arabella jumped away from him, and assumed suddenly all the propriety suitable to the occasion.

“Ah! you are frightened at me now?” said Zach, with an assumed regret in his tone—“it wasn’t always so.”

“It isn’t as it was, that I can see.”

“No—you’re right,” replied Zach; “you must excuse me. I am a trifle too frivolous to-night, for I have been lucky to-day, and made no end of money. Right again, girl—it isn’t as it was!”

“It ought never to have been allowed,” said Arabella, fretfully—“it lowered me. It lowers me now to be seen walking with a gentleman like you—for you are a gentleman.”

“Thank you for saying so—I am very much obliged.”

“And you took a lady for a wife, and though she wasn’t worthy of you, and played you false, and went away, yet—”

“Who?—my wife? Who told you anything about her?” he asked, sharply.

“I’ve heard a great deal naturally. People will talk.”

“And tell lies,” added Zach; “don’t believe all you hear against her. She was a good woman, with a bad temper—that’s all.”

He marched away in a very different mood after this; he was angry with himself for having paid attention to his housekeeper’s daughter—with his housekeeper’s daughter for speaking so unceremoniously of Lettice. He went straight to his room, after letting himself into the house, and called himself a fool—a thousand times a fool—as he prepared for the rest that was long in coming to him now, after its old aggravating habit.

It never came that night, after all his preparation. It was very strange—stranger still that the worry of a day’s business—the turmoil of a day’s good fight—should have made so little impression on his mind as to be chased away by thoughts of Lettice, and that ignorant young woman with whom he had flirted that evening. He rose early, with the intention of walking to business—walking the heaviness out of himself before he sat down to his desk for the day—and was standing with his hand on the lock of his room door, when he came suddenly on his knees again, bringing his chin against an adjacent chair, and nearly biting his tongue in half. Zach remained in that position, and swore at his own weakness—what the deuce

had he stopped to think about? and what had his tongue wanted hanging out of his mouth like an idiot's?

There was no mistake in all this. These were the old symptoms, and he would not be so foolish as to neglect them this time. He altered his mind about walking to business; he got up, and went cautiously downstairs, to write a letter at once to Mr. Tinchester, whose address he knew well. He offered him a large sum—a sum even greater than his deserts—to come back and take the management of one of the wharves and warehouses; he implored him as an old friend to come; he confessed that his health was in the way of his business, and that he could not do without him. He even hinted that a share in the profits of the business should be his manager's, if considered a better mode of payment.

Zach waited a fortnight for an answer to this letter; he was coquetting with his work, then, instead of with Arabella Evvers; keeping guard over his weakness, and not taxing himself more than he could help. Early on Saturday afternoon he thought of running down to Brighton until early on the Monday morning, and on Saturday morning Mr. Tinchester's reply was delivered to him.

Zach broke the seal, and read almost what he had feared from the long silence. Mr. Tinchester

dated from Paris—which was strange enough ; he regretted very much his inability to assist Zachary at this juncture ; he recommended his young friend to sell one of the wharves rather than risk his health too much ; and he alluded to an indisposition of his own in the shape of gout in one foot, that kept him a prisoner in the French capital.

Zach cursed Mr. Tinchester as he threw the letter into his waste basket ; then he worked hard for the rest of the morning, and gave orders that a cab should be waiting to take him to the London Bridge Station at half-past two. Before that time he had experienced one or two ugly fits of giddiness and sickness. He must be off at once, he thought ; he had not been a minute too soon in deciding on change of air. He was in his Hansom cab at half-past two, rattling over London Bridge. Before the Southwark side was reached, his hand was dashed through the trap in the roof with a precipitancy that led the cabman to rein in his horse at once, and glance down at his fare. Zach was huddled in a corner of the cab now, looking very white.

“ Back home,” he cried, “ to Stamford Hill—Hazeldean Villa—drive as rapidly as you can. I am—very ill !”

The cabman turned his horse’s head, and drove Zach at a good pace homewards. Before Zach’s

house he found it necessary to dismount, and assist Zach to alight, and help him along the garden path.

“Not much the matter, I hope, sir?” said the cabman cheerily.

“Broken up for good, that’s all, my man,” answered Zach.

“Can I do anything more for you, sir?”

“Yes. Drive to Dr. ——, Bayswater, and tell him to come at once, at any price! I must see him!”

Even then, fighting his way upstairs with Mrs. Evvers to assist him, he sighed over the expenses he was about to incur; and his first thought, whilst he lay dressed upon the bed, was the next week’s business, with no ruling agent over it, and only a parcel of clerks left to do their worst.

“Write—to Mr. Tinchester!” he cried to Mrs. Evvers—“write again!”

“Lor’ bless you! I can’t write, sir! Do keep quiet till the doctor comes—there’s a good, dear soul!”

“Some—one—someone who can write!” he shouted—“find somebody downstairs before I go out of my mind!”

When Dr. —— arrived, there was a maid-servant in the room acting as amanuensis for Zach—and Zach lying almost like a dead man on the bed, dictating in a hoarse whisper all that he had to say, and to implore.

“Doctor, don’t stop me in this!” he entreated; “it is very pressing. I—I must have that letter sent off before the half-past four post.”

“Is it nearly finished?”

“Yes.”

The physician waited, and the missive was despatched. Then the doctor looked at Zach, and asked the old questions—remembering Zach after a few moments, and reminding him of the advice by which he had not profited.

“What is the matter with me?” Zach asked.

“You have overtaxed your strength again—and you have run down like a clock.”

Like a clock overwound, and the spring of which had broken suddenly, damaging the mechanism for ever—but he was a thoughtful and merciful man, and did not say so.

“What is to be done?”

“Rest—rest—nothing but complete rest. If you excite yourself in any way it may be serious—and it will infallibly retard recovery.”

“But—but—good God!—the business!”

“Where are your friends?”

“You asked me that before—I haven’t any.”

“No friends—relations—anyone?” said the wondering physician.

“No, sir—they are all gone!”

And then Zach for the first time experienced the full sense of his loneliness. The doctor warned

him not to fret about his friends, any more than his business, and went downstairs to give instructions to Mrs. Evvers, about a nurse for the stricken man, about the care—great care—that was required to save him.

He was still instructing when Zach's bell rang violently. He and Mrs. Evvers went upstairs, together, to find the patient gesticulating and moaning wildly.

“I shall die like this—I feel I shall. It is all up with me. I'm utterly broken down, sir. Send—send for him, and ask him to come back to me—his brother Zach, sir—tell him that, please !”

“Of whom are you speaking ?”

“My brother—ago—good fellow—Upper Ground—Street—Number—three hundred—and six.”

“I will send some one at once.”

That some one was sent, was a long while finding out the place, and then was met by the following piece of information :

“Teddy Fernwell!—what, our bright Teddy, as we used to call him? Oh! he's been gone away from here these twelve months.”

CHAPTER VIII.

WAITING.

WITH a feverish impatience Zach waited for the return of the messenger from Upper Ground Street. He was seized with a strange desire to have his brother at his side, to trust wholly to him, and ask him to take care of him until he was well again. Surely he would do as much for the younger brother as he had done for the father dying in Drag's Court; he was not a man who bore malice in his heart, and he would forget and forgive all the faults that had stood between them both.

Zach felt terribly weak now—weak as a child. He felt like a man who had met with a serious accident—fallen from a house or something; then like a man waiting for a fit to seize him, or paralysis to strike him motionless. It was a sudden break up, and it boded ill for him; he had watched the physician anxiously, and adept as that man was in disguising looks, still there was a gravity upon his face that made Zach's heart sink. He might be going to die—that might be his sentence,

in return for disobedience to all the rules that had been given him concerning his health—he might die there in that room, without one face he cared for bending over him. Then the business ; the money that he had made, and that was put out at interest in a hundred ways, which no one would discover ; the absence of any will or testament conveying it to any one, and then his complete weakness, which made a child of him indeed !

The messenger came back at last, and delivered the bad news to Mrs. Evvers. Mrs. Evvers was almost afraid to communicate it to Zach ; she was putting on her bonnet and shawl to ask further advice of the surgeon who had been found by Dr. —— to look after Zach, when the sick man found strength to ring the bell again—and to keep on ringing.

“ Who was that knocked just now ? ” he asked.

“ It was—well, sir—it was—— ”

“ The boy come back from Ground Street. Don’t tell me a lie about it ! ” he cried fiercely.

“ Pray don’t worrit so, sir. The doctor says we mustn’t let you worrit, but keep you cool and comfor’ble.”

“ The boy—from Ground Street,” gasped Zach ; “ wasn’t it ? ”

“ Yes, sir, it was.”

“ And my—my brother ? Won’t he come ? —won’t he come near me ! ”

“ Yes, yes, I daresay he would, sir, if we could find him. But he’s been gone away more nor a year, and nobody knows anythink about him—and people have been calling upon him and trying to find him, like ourselves. He’ll turn up in good time, if you keep cool and comfor’ble. I’ll be a mother and a brother to you till he comes.”

“ He’s dead!—I’m sure he’s dead!” cried Zach; “ not heard of for twelve months, and no one to know—anything about him. Oh! Teddy, Teddy, if I could only see you again—just once more!”

He burst into a fit of passionate sobbing, that was terrible to hear; he dashed his hands before his face, as though conscious that his weakness was unmanly, and unworthy of him; he groaned and writhed upon his bed, and Mrs. Evvers ran out of the room in affright to fetch the doctor, for whom already she had put her bonnet on.

The doctor found him still and stony enough, taking him for a dead man at first sight, and starting back for an instant as he entered the room. Zach was not dead, however—although his excitement had been too much for him, for the nonce. He was weaker after that; on the Sunday he was desperately weak, wild in his manner, and rambling in his speech, like a man to whose brain a fever had stolen. They who watched him could not understand him, or make him understand; and when Arabella came into the room, with tear-

filled eyes, and asked if he knew who she was, he replied, "Lettice," in reply, and then turned away his head. Arabella Evvers constituted herself his nurse ; she would have no interference in that resolution, and perhaps it was well for Zach that he had one who loved him a little, watchful at his side. He knew nothing of her presence there till he woke as from a stupor on the Tuesday morning, clearer in his faculties, but more like a child than ever. He looked at her very gloomily as she bent over him.

"I hope you know me to-day," she said, with a forced and faint smile.

"Yes—I know you."

Then he looked anxiously round the room.

"No one has called?"

"No one."

"What is to-day?"

"Tuesday."

He tried to count the days that had intervened since he was stricken down, and failed. The effort was too much for him, and he closed his eyes.

Arabella was a tolerable nurse, but somewhat indiscreet and garrulous. She began to ask if she could get him anything to eat or drink—if he fancied anything?

He shook his head.

Would he like to hear her read anything?

He shook his head again.

“When is the doctor coming?” he asked, when she had desisted from questioning him.

“He will be here this morning.”

“Has he—has he told anybody that I shall die, Arabella?”

“Good gracious!—no. It isn’t likely that a young man like you will die. Oh! don’t talk like this, Mr. Zachary. It’s too much for me!”

“I shall die, I know!” said Zach, with a heavy sigh.

“You’d better talk about the business, than have such thoughts as that.”

Then Zach gave voice to the most remarkable assertion of his life.

“I don’t care about the business—let it go!”

Arabella was departing from the room, when he called her back.

“Give me a pen,” he said.

There was a pen in an inkstand on a side-table, and Arabella took it to him. He tried to hold it between his fingers, and then let it drop upon the carpet.

“No—it’s no use. Ah! well,” with another sigh, “it doesn’t matter much.”

He asked no more questions. He had forgotten his letter to Mr. Tinchester, and when Mrs. Evvers reminded him—somewhat imprudently—of that piece of dictation, he made no reply for several minutes.

“Has he come?” he asked, at last.

“No, sir.”

“Why should he?”

He was silent till the doctor arrived to see him. The surgeon had looked in before the physician's advent, but Zach had feigned sleep, to avert the questions that might be put to him. When Doctor — was standing by his bedside, he said,

“Well, I am going to die. Why don't you say so?”

“I—I really cannot say that. Your life is not in my hands!”

“You know that I shall never leave this bed alive. Why don't you tell me this at once?”

“You are in a critical condition—but there is hope yet.”

“Well—there *may* be. I hope there is—I don't want to die!”

“Have you no one whom you would like to see?” asked the physician.

“Ah! I understand!” said Zach, quickly; “in case that I am right in my surmises. You cannot find me my brother?” he asked, with his old fierceness predominant.

“No.”

“Has any further inquiry been made?”

“Yes. A Mr. Wynn, of Griffin Street, has been communicated with.”

“And he knows nothing?”

“Nothing.”

“Don’t let that man come here,” said Zach, shuddering; “he preaches too much—he is too good for me to meet!”

“Who—Mr. Wynn? I am not certain that he is aware of your illness.”

“If he come—give orders—give strict orders that I can’t be seen.”

Zach betrayed so much excitement that the doctor saw the necessity for those orders also.

“A very good man—in his way,” murmured Zach; “but I can’t face him.”

“You will pardon me,” said the physician, “but have you not a wife, whom you would be glad to see?”

“Who told you that I had a wife?”

“The housekeeper.”

“My wife would not be glad to see me, at any rate!” said Zach; “let her keep away. I don’t know where she is—I communicate with her solicitors once a quarter—she is abroad somewhere. If you could—if you could only find Teddy, sir!”

“That is your brother?”

“Yes. Advertise for him in the papers. Edward Fernwell, late of Upper Ground Street. Say—say—”

He paused, and had to struggle with his breath for awhile, keeping one hand upon the doctor’s

wrist, lest the physician should go away before he could speak again.

“Say—Zach forgets the evil that has stood between two brothers, and is very sorry—for the past and—and anxious to find the one friend who was faithful to him for so long!”

“It shall be inserted in all the papers.”

And it was, leading to much speculation amongst the curious, but bringing back to life no Teddy Fernwell.

It brought Martin Wynn to the house, as might have been anticipated, and there Martin was met by the startling news that he had been expected, and orders had been left at the door to keep him out. Martin walked back very full of thought, and quite at a loss to account for this stern interdict; there was much mystery with these Fernwells still, and all respecting them was part of the old incomprehensibility. If he thought more of Teddy Fernwell, and held him, for reasons that will be presently explained, more highly than ever in his estimation, still he was in doubt as to Teddy's intentions respecting *him*. Teddy had disappeared suddenly from Upper Ground Street, Martin knew, also, and there was a sad conviction in Martin's mind that the old pupil resented the suspicions that had been cast on him, and was hiding from all friends. Possibly he had already reached his brother Zach's house, and it was he who had refused him

admittance there. Well, it served him right; he should have had greater faith in his own teaching, and in *Teddy Fernwell*! He should have had his daughter's faith!

Meanwhile, Zach's impression was that *Teddy* had seen the advertisement, and it had had no effect upon him. *Teddy* had done with him for ever, just as he said that he should, and the younger brother must die alone in that house. When another week had passed, he was still convinced that he should die; he became no stronger; he slept less; he was tormented more by his isolation; he grew more irritable. The physician even annoyed him; he was making a show of him, Zach told him one day, when he brought a brother physician to see his patient, and to talk over him lying there, as an interesting specimen of a man who had worked himself to death.

He had only one friend, and that he scarcely acknowledged, in *Arabella Evvers*. Only one who was constant in her ministry and tender in her watch of him. A young woman with no right to nurse him, but who tended him with her heart in the cause, and perhaps loved him more tenderly and unselfishly when she felt assured with Zach that he would die. Then all the romance in her came into full flame—a plant of rank luxuriance, that grew apace, and shadowed many after days. The fostering of so wild—and yet so

pure—a passion, was to bring its retributive justice on her, when she was in Kent Road lodging-house again. She got over it, and married four years afterwards, but it was not till those years had passed that she forgot Zach Fernwell. Some women are very weak and wilful, but they are faithful in their weakness and wilfulness to the false idols they have reared. She, at least, never loved Zach so well as when she was sure that she should not marry him.

Arabella even took excursions on her own account to the wharves; she knew that Zach used to be very anxious about them, and work night and day there, and if Zach took a turn for the better, he might wish to learn suddenly how the business was progressing. But her missions were wretched failures; the clerks did not know her, and treated her with incivility, and all seemed confusion and insubordination there. One man, who she learned afterwards was the head clerk, asked for her authority in coming there, and stated it to be his intention to call on Mr. Fernwell with full particulars of the progress of business in a day or two—"he was the only gentleman who at all treated her like a lady," Arabella told her mother. But that gentleman never came, and it was nobody's business to look after him. Zach had completely thrown the business overboard; the "ruling passion" was not a strong one in his

greater weakness, in this instance of "breaking down." He was too ill to care about business, or what became of it. Let the whole world scramble for it after he was dead, if it liked—he had no interest there. His wife's friends must look after the interests of his wife and child ; he could not hold a pen, and were he capable now, he did not think that he would write a line on behalf of all those who thus studiously avoided him.

"Never a man, Arabella, was left to die so completely alone as this," he said one evening, when he had given up every hope of seeing the old faces.

"Still, not without true friends, Zachary."

"Thank you. But you are not like the others," he murmured ungratefully, "not like my brother—who might have been charitable and more forgiving at the last. He does not know—he will not believe how ill I am, or—I think that he would come."

"You need not be quite alone," said Arabella nervously, "there is your—your wife. Why do you not let her know? Let me write," she added with a spasmodic jerk.

"You don't know her," said Zach, "she is firmer and harder than I was. She would not come."

"Try her."

Zach shook his head.

"Or she would come with her reproaches for

the past—and I can't face them. But Teddy would not do that—not he!"

"Oh! if we could find him!" cried the girl.

She had imbibed from Zach this wish for Teddy Fernwell—this concentrative interest in the one man standing aloof from them. Every night her last prayer was that God would send Teddy Fernwell to his brother.

"I used never to speak of him when I was at your lodgings," said Zach mournfully, "though, if you remember he came once, thinking that I was in disgrace with my aunt. Ah!—he could come then. But now he won't!"

Very, very weak was this man stricken so low—this man that had seemed wrapped in self as in a coat of mail. He was just strong enough to raise his hand to his eyes and wipe away the tears that had sprung there—strong enough to feel ashamed of his weakness, and turn his head aside to hide the quivering of his lip.

"He'll come yet, perhaps," consoled Arabella; "I don't think that he has heard of your illness, myself. I don't think—oh! dear me!" she gasped in a lower tone, that Zach did not catch, "oh, dear!—oh, my!"

For the door had opened noiselessly and closed again, shutting in with her a very tall young man, with black wiry hair, and a pale excited face. A young man who raised his hand by way of caution

to her, and hushed her slowly into silence—almost into stone.

“ You don’t think that he has heard of my illness ? ” repeated Zach, with his face still averted —“ well, I’d rather think that than that he kept away of his own free will. But, Bella, isn’t it strange that I—— ”

He paused, and seemed to struggle to explain. He had already talked too much, Arabella thought, for one day.

“ Isn’t it strange,” he went on, “ that there should come to me, lying here, all the boy’s love for him—the love that I never had again after I went to Aunt Henwood’s ? Is it not like a miracle, girl, that it should all steal back like this ? —that I should feel just as the poor, wretched boy felt whom he shielded with his greater strength. There was no one like him then, I used to think ; and now,” he added, with the old cry, “ he won’t come near me ! ”

He covered his head with the bed-clothes in his grief, and the man at the door passed with his cat-like steps across the room, whispered in the woman’s ears, “ Break it to him by degrees,” and then dropped into a chair in the shadow of the bed-curtains.

“ You mustn’t go on like this, Zachary,” said the girl, also excited ; “ he will come near you. I’m sure he will—very soon now.”

“Sure!”

“Yes, yes—he’s on his way; keep strong—he has sent word that he is coming.”

“No—has he?—*has he?*”

Zach turned round in his bed to make sure, by her face, that it was all true. His innate shrewdness told him more than had been detailed to him, or his eagerness led him to the truth at once, for, with a new strength, that was but momentary, he pulled back the curtain near him, and disclosed his brother, rising from the chair there as from the dead.

“Keep quiet, Zach—no nonsense, there’s a good little chap. It’s all right now.”

“Oh! Teddy—I’m—I’m so glad that you have come!”

CHAPTER IX.

TEDDY RESUMES HIS OLD OCCUPATION.

ZACHARY FERNWELL said no more that night. He had unduly exerted himself before his brother's advent, and the meeting, though partly prepared for, was too much for him. He lost his voice entirely, and the surgeon was sent for in a hurry to know what new phase of the complaint was this.

The surgeon, not knowing anything about it, took refuge in the satisfactory explanation of "Nerves," and recommending quiet, and great care, and incessant watch, departed. Zach remained conscious, however, and the loss of his voice did not distress him. He became quiet enough, but he lay and watched Teddy, moving about the room, arranging things to his satisfaction ; and when Teddy came near him, to make sure that he was awake, or that he wanted for nothing, a faint smile flickered over the sick man's face.

In the morning Zach's voice returned to him, and he would have exercised it in a hundred questions had not Teddy stopped him. The elder

brother stood over him, and issued his mandates as though he were master there.

"It's no good, Zach," he said, cheerfully; "you'll keep your mouth shut till the doctor comes. It's taking up an old trade of mine to be nurse again, and I'm a nurse who will have his orders attended to. So—shut up, young fellow!"

"But—where have you been?"

"Amongst a heap of foreigners, to be sure," said Teddy, "getting sun-burnt, and trying to grow a moustache, which got into my mouth, and made me cough so awfully, that I shaved it off again, though I was looking uncommonly handsome under the nose, Zach. But, until the swell physician comes, and tells me what I may say, and what I mayn't, I'll not utter another word. And if you begin again, I'll shy something at you!"

He spoke with the rapidity and brusqueness of the old Teddy—the boy Teddy. It was part of his plan to cheer Zach, and it succeeded. Zach was looking infinitely better in appearance when Dr. —— arrived.

"Ah!" said the physician, immediately upon entering, "here's an improvement to-day!"

"He's come, sir," answered Zach, like a pleased child, as he nodded his head towards his brother.

"Oh! you're the Teddy, then, that there has been such a fuss about?" said the physician, good-humouredly.

"My friends have had a bad habit of making a fuss about me all my life, sir," answered Teddy.

When Dr. —— went out of the room that morning, Teddy followed him, full of inquiries, —all affecting the one great inquiry—Would Zach get over this?

"I have been in great doubt as to his recovery," replied the physician; "everything has been against him until now. He is in great danger still, but with care, good nursing, and absence of anything from his mind calculated to depress him further, I think that we shall save him now."

"We shall, sir," said Teddy, executing a most volatile gambol in the hall—"I think we shall, sir, too."

Teddy knew that it would not be his fault, if Zach did not recover. He had faith in his own powers, and Zach had faith in him. He set himself to nurse Zach, to cheer and sustain him with all that power that he possessed of brightening the surroundings which we have seen in the early days, before Martin went to Drag's Court. And Zach grew better from that day—slowly better—coming back by very minute degrees to a sense of his position—to an anxiety to live and get strong once more.

The first sign of his old self was evidenced in his inquiry concerning that business to which he had shunned all allusion during his illness. This

was a week after Teddy had appeared at Stamford Hill, and when Zach had been promised that he should leave his bed next day.

“I suppose it has almost collapsed ?” he asked.

“It’s in a muddle, certainly, Zach, but you won’t mind ?”

“I will not fret, at all events,” he answered, with a faint smile.

“When you were asleep the day before yesterday, I went over to the wharves, and tried to understand the business, and the contracts, and the books. I played the great man there, and let everybody know that I was Mr. Henwood’s big brother looking after the little brother’s interests.”

“Thank you, Teddy. It was time some one looked after them.”

“But it was hard work to look in the right direction, and I could not do much good.”

“How could you ?” answered Zach ; “it was the one study of my life, from the first moment I entered Henwood’s. I killed myself in mastering the *minutiae* of it all—I worked my heart out, and broke down.”

“You went at it with a vengeance, Zach, certainly,” responded his brother ; “well, you must take things more quietly after this—not be quite so anxious to——”

“To make money,” concluded Zach, seeing that his brother paused—“no, I shall never care much for money again.”

“Ah! hate the sight of it soon, I daresay!” said Teddy, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

“I don’t want to be poor—to be a burden to anyone, of course,” explained Zach, slowly; “but I shall never fight hard for profits—perhaps,” with a short laugh, “it is for the reason that I shall never have the chance, for Dr. —— tells me that I shall not be the same man ever again.”

“I hope not!” answered Teddy.

“Ah! you mean not the same cold-hearted, unnatural wretch that success made of me?—well, I hope not that,” replied Zach; “but you must keep my soul from narrowing again, Teddy.”

“When you are strong——”

“Don’t I tell you that I shall never be strong?—that I shall always be like a delicate girl, to be looked after, and taken care of?” cried Zach; “you must not think of leaving me any more. I have thought so much about that, and about you. Teddy,” he said, more anxiously, “I have thought how we two, separated so long, should now live and work for each other side by side to the end. We are both lonely men—let us set shoulder to shoulder, and work onwards—brothers at last!”

He stretched out his hand to Teddy, who wrung it in his own, but did not reply for several minutes. At last he looked at Zach steadily, and said—

“You are very kind—it is a generous offer, but

I don't think that I should care about this business, and," with affected lightness, "I don't exactly know how you are going to turn out yet. If you were to become very poor, now, or if you were to meet with a heavy loss in money——"

He paused, and Zach said lightly—

"I could bear that loss."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes—honour bright," repeated Zach.

"Then I'll try you," said Teddy, "so screw your courage up."

Zach stared at his brother, but though he did not flinch much, he certainly flinched a little—which, after all, is not a great deal to say against this penitent.

"My visit to the wharves yesterday appeared to create no small astonishment—even dismay. Your head clerk at the city place objected to my interference."

"Hammond!—a sly rascal!—I never liked him. He would have troubled me very much, if I had been disposed to feel troubled concerning anything."

"Exactly. Well, he's off."

"Gone, do you mean?"

"Yes; he absconded after I had left, taking a great deal of money with him, and finishing off by imitating your signature on a banker's cheque. I

suppose that you will be a loser, at least, of twenty thousand pounds.”

Twenty thousand pounds!—the sum that he had fixed upon as the value of Mrs. Henwood’s share in the business—the amount which he had indirectly paid to Mrs. Henwood, and paid so easily!

Zach’s thin fingers interlaced themselves together, and cracked with the tension that he put upon them. He was getting better, certainly, for the loss of his money was troubling him. And yet he was growing better in another way also, for, meeting his brother’s anxious looks, he laughed.

“Don’t look so despairingly at me, Teddy—Rome wasn’t built in a day, and I shall never wholly get over my bad habits unless you stay with me. There, let the money go—we’ll not think any more of it just now.”

“Yes—we’ll finish it all off at once,” said Teddy; “we will go into business matters for the next half hour, if you please.”

Teddy and Zach went into a committee of ways and means at once. The elder brother saw the impossibility of Zach being fit for business for many months to come, and the impracticability of leaving the wharves in strangers’ hands. Zach had only one friend in the world, and he, sitting there, was unsuited for the task—ignorant of City ways and City men. Zach was readily persuaded

to dispose of one wharf out of two, and as Henwood's Wharf in Upper Ground Street was well-conducted, and, at least, was not a loss just then, it was proposed to leave it for the present in the hands of the old-fashioned, but honest sub-manager there, and jog on quietly till Zach was strong enough to give his orders. That matter was arranged, and as we shall not recur to it, the reader may be glad to know at once that Zach got clear of one-half of his business at a loss that was not wholly ruinous, but that did not leave him very rich. On the Surrey side of the water less profits were made, and only a simple kind of store-house work was conducted.

“Henwood's Wharf in Upper Ground Street can bide the time of its proprietor,” said Teddy.

“Of its proprietors,” corrected Zach.

Teddy would argue that point on a future day.

“I don't think that it will ever suit me, Zach,” he said, “or that I shall be fit for dodging about the streets, looking up creditors. I have a capital trade on my hands, and some people are good enough to think that I'm clever at it. Five or six pounds a week are not to be despised.”

“Five or six pounds?” cried Zach, despairingly.

“Ah! you were a fellow always with high notions,” said his brother, laughing; “but, then, you have a wife and child to work for.”

“What?” said Zach.

"A wife and child to work for," repeated Teddy, firmly; "we are not going to have any more nonsense about deeds of separations. We'll have nothing but good deeds after this."

Zach lay in bed, astonished at this sudden intrusion upon him of a subject that was distressing.

"Don't speak of this," he muttered.

"Oh! yes, I shall."

"She's a firm, hard woman, who—"

"Who would have been here with me, if she could have found the strength, which your letter to Tinchester took away from her."

"What do you mean?—did the letter reach Tinchester?—who told you?—when did you see Lettice?"

"Ah! now we're getting curious, and that's a good sign. Your letter to Mr. Tinchester went dodging about after him, for he had left the hotel where you first wrote to him, and taken his gout somewhere else. But, luckily, it found him, and he sent it to Mrs. Henwood, and Mrs. Henwood, after frightening her daughter with it—her daughter, who was ill enough before, poor woman!—brought it on to me, quietly at work studying design."

"She knew where to find you."

"Oh! aunt and I are the best of friends," said Teddy; "I don't know what she sees in me now,

but she don't like me out of her sight too long, and she's always inventing excuses to give me money, which I won't take. What a dreadful thing, Zach, to have such a horror of capital! Sometimes I think that I am not any more sane than you are."

Zach was too excited to smile at this.

"If you don't wish to drive me mad, tell me what you mean about my wife? My illness has alarmed her, you say?"

"It added to an illness which had overtaken her before—she had been fretting, or something, I believe. She has a bad habit of fretting at times, her mother says."

"What has she to fret about now, I wonder?" said Zach—"she is free, and her own mistress. I did not treat her unhandsomely."

"Not so far as *money* was concerned," said Teddy, "which is saying a great deal. And as we have been saying a great deal too much to-day, I'll take the liberty of withdrawing."

He left Zach to think of his wife, and of the hints which he had somewhat nervously conveyed, concerning a better time for them together. He was anxious to see Zach begin his new life, with his wife at his side again; that was part of the task which he had set himself in coming there. He went downstairs into the front room, where Arabella was dusting and arranging ornaments

to think of it also—seeing Arabella Evvers quite at home there, put him in mind of another task, more painful to his big heart, that he had intended to set *her*.

Arabella was singing to herself as he entered, and so absorbed in her singing, that she jumped when he addressed her. They had become good friends, these two—possibly for the reason that Teddy's character was very easy to read, and to admire.

“How happy we are this morning, Miss Evvers!” said Teddy.

“Oh! dear, what a fright you have given me!” she answered, pausing, with a duster in her hand, to reply—“yes; we all have a right to be happy now—with him getting on so fast.”

“Ye—es,” said Teddy, in a hesitating manner; “and those who are dear to him, like me and his wife, especially.”

“I'm sure you are not happier than I am,” she said, very quickly and thoughtlessly, ignoring the mention of the wife altogether; “you can't feel happier, sir, that all my hopes—all my prayers—have come true like this.”

“All your prayers for him?” said Teddy—“come, you're a good girl to think so much of strangers.”

“Strangers!” exclaimed Arabella, indignantly—“I only pray for those I love with all my heart—

those who have been kind and good to me, that is," she corrected, with a blush, divining, for the first time, the true reason for his questioning.

"I hope you wish for my brother's happiness?"

"Yes."

"He can only be a happy man again, with all mistakes corrected and atoned for, poor fellow," said Teddy, "and it was a grave mistake that separated him from his wife."

"She wasn't fit for him!—she wasn't go——"

"Did you ever see her?"

"Only once," exclaimed Arabella, with a toss to her head, "when he was married."

"I have seen her," said Teddy, "and I find her a somewhat impatient, but a very true-hearted woman, loving her husband dearly, sorrowing for the causes which separated them, grieving at his obstinacy, and—though she is not inclined to tell me so—repentant for her own. To my brother in his prosperity she might have remained always too proud to come to him; but in his trouble, when she is able to drag herself here, she will take her rightful place. You and I, both friends of Zach, must make this step an easy one for her."

"I can't help you!" cried Arabella, losing the little self-command that she had ever possessed; "you bring back his own misery with that wife—I'm sure you do!"

"I don't see that."

“You make—everybody—wretched! Why can’t she keep away now? She has kept away long enough for—for every—body’s misery!”

Arabella burst into tears, and buried her face in the duster. Before she had recovered herself, Teddy had drawn down her hands from her face, and was holding them in his.

“Miss Evvers,” he said, “you have been very kind to Zach in your attendance, and Zach and I, I am sure, will ever remain your debtors; but let me advise you honestly to go away. His wife may be here to-day, or to-morrow; the letter I received this morning informed me that she was better, and anxious to see her husband, and just at present your position here may embarrass her and you.”

“Do you—do you dare to think that there has been any harm between your brother and me?” she cried, fiercely snatching her hands from him, and looking the injured heroine at once.

“No, I do not,” replied Teddy—“I think too highly of you; but I see in your stay here danger to yourself.”

“Danger!” was the scornful repetition.

“Danger to your peace of mind, Miss Evvers,” said Teddy—“to that peace which ought to be yours, and which uncharitable folk, putting the worst construction upon everything—it’s a way they have—will surely take from you. This has

all been a kind—a sisterly interest in my brother, I know; but in his trouble, like a brother of your own, let me kindly urge upon you the necessity of leaving him."

"*He* wishes it, I know! Why don't he say so?"

"He has not spoken of this, Miss Evvers—I have taken this unpleasant business on myself, for your benefit and his."

"Very well," with a quivering lip—"I will go. He's better, thank God, and I can't do any more good. Oh! sir," with sudden energy, "I did love him, but I loved him best of all when he was dying, as I thought, and I wished that I could change with him, and—"

"Hush! hush!—you will be sorry that you've told me to-morrow," interrupted Teddy—"keep such thoughts to yourself; you're a young woman, and should not confess all this to me. You are deserving of a better fate than to care for a man that has a wife living—shake it off, girl—crush it out with the woman's pride that, I'm sure, you have, or you're not the woman that I take you for."

"Yes—yes—I will crush it out—in time."

Poor, silly girl!—she did not look as if she had crushed it out when she came into that room shortly afterwards, with her eyes red with weeping. A true sorrow in this parting, but an unnatural one, for which we do not ask the virtuous reader's sympathy.

“I’m a-going now, sir,” she said—“I see it’s best.”

“That’s well. That’s brave of you,” said Teddy.

“He was asleep when I went in to bid him good-bye, and I hadn’t—I had—had—hadn’t the heart to wake him. Tell him that I’ve gone, sir, and give my—*duty* to him. Don’t say anything to mother, but that I have gone.”

She went slowly and reluctantly out of the house, and Teddy stood at the door watching her departure from Stamford Hill—from the pages of this history. “The bold hussy, she ought to have known better!” cries *materfamilias*. Well, we are all of one opinion on that point. Shall we record the verdict—“Serve her right!”

Teddy did not express an opinion even to himself; he looked very sadly into the open street, but whether he was thinking of her share of blame, or Zach’s, did not appear from any out-spoken words. He was still reflecting, however, and *might* have spoken, when a hired fly drove up to the door, and disturbed his train of thought.

“Lettice!” he cried, and ran down the steps, and along the forecourt, to confront—Christie Wynn!

CHAPTER X.

LETS IN THE SUNSHINE.

“ O H ! Teddy, you wicked fellow, where *have* you been ?”

It was an odd greeting, but it unnerved Teddy Fernwell more than a sentence of deeper import, or more graceful construction. It was uttered heartily, and by a young woman who betrayed no small excitement at the sight of him. It was a genuine protest against the motives which had taken him out of England. Christie corrected herself before he could reply.

“ We have all wondered where you were so long—father and Aunt Polly especially,” said this little hypocrite—“ why could you not have called, and bidden us good-bye ?”

“ I was in a hurry to get away, Miss Wynn—Miss Christie,” he said, the instant afterwards, “ and your father, if you remember, had not a very good opinion of me then.”

“ Oh ! how can you think so, now ?”

“ Well, I will not think so now,” said Teddy, cheerfully, “ for now I can face him and explain,

if he wishes for an explanation. But he was in the right—he always is—to distrust a man who could not give a fair answer to his questions. Who is that in the cab?"

"Your brother's wife."

"Ha!—she has come, then?" cried Teddy; "she called on you at Griffin Street, first of all? I—I hope that she hasn't said—anything—about me?"

"Nothing to your discredit, at any rate," replied Christie; "but she has told your story for us, and Aunt Polly don't think any the better of you for it."

"Indeed!—how's that?" said Teddy, not seeing the joke with his usual quickness.

"Because she has always had the best opinion of you, and the greatest faith."

"She said so once—with *you*," was the meaning response to this, "and I felt stronger for ever after that night. I—"

"Will you speak to Lettice now? She will wonder what we are talking about."

Teddy, thus called to order, hastened at once to greet his sister-in law, and assist her from the carriage. A French *bonne*, with his niece in her arms, followed Lettice from the carriage to the house.

"How is he?" Lettice asked at once of Teddy.

"Better," answered her brother-in-law—"gain-

ing strength with every day. Have you courage to face him, and own your share of the blunders that have come to pass in this house?"

"Yes."

"Then I must give him courage to face you," said Teddy; "he must have no sudden surprise—where's the little one?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Play a practical joke on old Zach," said Teddy; "wait in the parlour, you too, till I come down again. I'm as full of mischief as a monkey."

"Mischief or happiness?" asked Lettice—"you who find your happiness in other people's."

"Oh! get out!" said Teddy, taking the infant in his arms; "don't try to make me think too much of myself."

He went upstairs with a blush upon his honest face; he marched boldly into Zach's room with the child in his arms, and Zach woke up to stare with amazement at him.

"Zach, I did not tell you that I was married," said Teddy, "and settled, with the usual encumbrances, of which you may take this one as a specimen."

He sat down by Zach's bedside, and put the child almost into his brother's arms.

"You don't mean this, Teddy?" said Zach; "but—but what *do* you mean?"

“ Well, this is the first of the home-faces back again to make home happy, Zach,” said Teddy ; “ in a little while—say a day or two—your wife will follow it, if you wish it.”

“ I cannot wish her further unhappiness with me,” replied Zach—“ and she was never happy here.”

“ You must try to make her so,” said Teddy ; “ we begin afresh—the whole of us—from this day. I haven’t come back for nothing, I hope.”

“ I can’t ask her to come back now—I am a fretful invalid.”

“ You were more fretful—decidedly a more unpleasant fellow—when you were in the stirrups, Zach. Here, I can’t nurse this young one all day. Catch hold !”

Zach was strong enough to hold the child in his arms now, and had he not been, there was no help for it, for Teddy had hurried from the room. It was a marvel of a child, this one, for it was not scared at its father’s white face, on which a smile was resting—it was a child of wonderful self-possession, and betrayed at that instant more nerve than Zach did.

Teddy reappeared just as the child had begun to whimper at the strangeness of its position, and when Zach, left to his own resources, was trying if the hammering of the spoon against a glass handy

to him would keep its attention distracted from convulsions.

“It has been very good, Teddy,” said Zach, breathing freer at his brother’s advent; “but this was a dangerous experiment.”

“Now, see this young one walk,” remarked Teddy, taking the child from the bed; “you would not believe it possible without you saw it. She can walk as well as you can.”

“I daresay she can do that,” said Zach, ruefully.

Teddy walked the child across the room, and out of the door, and Zach leaned on one elbow to watch the process, and was inclined to laugh hysterically at it.

Teddy gave the child to the nurse waiting without, and then returned to his brother.

“The child takes to you,” said Zach—“but then, everybody takes to you!”

“Very kind of everybody,” said Teddy in reply—“and so you could not believe that I was married?”

“I don’t see why you should not be married,” mused Zach, “only I have always fancied—I don’t know why—that you would marry Christie Wynn.”

“Ha! ha!—that’s a good joke,” said Teddy, with feigned lightness of demeanour—“whenever did you find time to *fancy* that?”

“I used to hope so.”

“You?—why, then, you *had* time to think the best for me occasionally, Zach.”

“I found time for that,” was Zach’s reply; “but you are evading the subject. Where is Lettice?—will she come?”

Teddy looked at his watch.

“Well, yes. She will be in this room at six o’clock. Try to think of what is best and kindest to say, meanwhile.”

And at six o’clock to the minute Lettice came into the room, nervous and trembling, like a woman who had done wrong in leaving him.

“Oh! Zach, I am sorry that we have been apart so long! If you will only say so too, it will make me a good and patient wife for ever.”

“I will think only how glad I am that you are here, and of the new life which we will share together.”

“The lower life,” said Lettice, “for you have been unfortunate, I am told.”

“Yes, somewhat unfortunate—but all the better for that, Teddy tells me. And I believe all that my partner says.”

“Partner!” and Lettice turned to Teddy with a smile, to which he responded, although he shook his head good-humouredly.

“We’ll talk about that another time,” he replied,

as he went out of the room, and left this strange couple to themselves.

He went downstairs into the drawing-room, somewhat nervously, and was there confronted with a new-comer—the man who had been the first to save him, and, strangely enough, the first to distrust him.

“Mr.—Mr. Wynn,” said Teddy, “I am glad to see you.”

“And yet you ran away from England, and cost me no end of trouble in searching for you to no purpose,” said Martin, “for I could not take your loss patiently, after all.”

“Sir, shall I tell you——”

“Mrs. Henwood’s daughter has told me everything, Teddy, and that spares you a long story,” he said, “and leaves me but one thing to ask *you*.”

“What is that?” said Teddy, nervously.

“Your pardon,” he replied, “for I am very much ashamed of myself. There, if you will not forgive me, I will ask my daughter’s intercession. My rebellious daughter!” he added, with a meaning that brought the colour to Christie’s cheek.

“There is nothing to forgive, Mr. Wynn; but it makes me the happiest fellow alive to think that you and I have no mystery, and no distrust between us. You, to whom——”

“That will do,” said Martin, quickly—“no more

thanks—they pain me, Teddy, for you are the hero of this story. Christie, he evades his forgiveness of me—will you ask him, for the sake of the old times he ran away from ?”

“No, no—I pardon freely all that there is to pardon,” cried Teddy; “and I don’t see anything to forgive—really.”

“And you are the happiest fellow alive, eh ?” said Martin, as they shook hands—“with *nothing* wanting to complete your happiness ?”

“Nothing but a glimpse of Miss Polly now.”

“Nothing but *that* ?”

“Well—no, sir,” stammered Teddy, flushing up to the roots of his hair, and trying to keep his eyes from lowering—“what else can there be ?”

“Oh ! you mustn’t ask me,” and Martin Wynn indulged in one of those hearty laughs, which had been more common to him years ago than at that later period.

The question was not repeated by Teddy; he fancied that he was not alone in his embarrassment, and he hastened to change the subject, and yet to think of it very deeply whilst making headway, or trying to do so, with other topics less mysterious. But when they were alone together—Martin Wynn and he—as happened presently, Martin, to his surprise, returned to the subject.

“Nothing to wish for in the world ?—nothing wanting to complete your happiness ?” said

Martin, thoughtfully—"well, you have changed, Teddy."

"Not much, sir," said Teddy, with a laugh.

"With a better knowledge of each other—with a love for the old days in our hearts—I did hope that you would have proposed, Teddy."

"Proposed, sir?—*proposed*, did you say?"

"Proposed to come back to Griffin Street, and take your old place at my right hand, as the son whom I love best. I shall never believe that you have forgiven my foolish pride, or sunk that foolish pride of yours, unless you come back to me."

"My pride, sir—"

"Ah! it is the pride that apes humility, Teddy, but it stands between you and me yet—an ugly barrier!"

"Mr. Wynn—you forget—you—"

"I forget nothing. I am prepared," he said, drily, "for all consequences. There, the truth is," he blurted forth, "you're so abominably modest, that if you won't ask me to give you my daughter, I must ask you to take her off my hands."

"Sir, I—"

"Yes, I know. The shadow of the gaol, and all that *bosh!*" cried Martin; "you have said it before, but don't aggravate me any more with that sentiment, for it's false and unreasonable. I take a man as I find him—and I find him," suddenly

clapping a hand on Teddy's shoulder, with a vehemence that staggered his eager listener, "honest, true, unselfish, grateful, and all that I could wish for in a son. If you do not love Christie, now—if you can look me in the face, and say that you have outlived your love—I will not trouble you any more."

"It is not possible to say that," murmured Teddy.

"Then, upon my honour, I don't think that you have a right to make everybody miserable by walking up and down by yourself, raving of a past which you have outlived. So, Teddy, come back to Griffin Street, and chance it!"

"Where—where are you going?"

Mr. Wynn had seized his hat, which he had brought some time ago into the drawing-room.

"Time is very valuable with me just now, and I cannot stay any longer," said Mr. Wynn; "but I heard that you were here last night from Zach's wife, and I thought that I would sacrifice a little time to run over here to speak to you. Good-bye."

"But Miss—Christie, sir?"

"Well, she can't walk to Griffin Street by herself, you know!" and with this piece of information, Martin Wynn darted out of the house. We hope that this marqueterie worker *was* busy at home in Griffin Street—surely we have not caught out truthful Martin Wynn, in this last chapter of our history!

Martin Wynn's daughter did not walk to Griffin Street by herself. Teddy Fernwell formed her escort—Teddy, who could afford to leave his brother in as gentle hands as his own had been. Teddy and Christie went away together very nervously, for Teddy, despite all Martin's assertions, was afraid still, and Christie considered that her father had not acted with due decorum in running away to Griffin Street without her. But they were both unromantic people, the reader is aware, and after a while they sobered down, and did not miss Mr. Wynn much. They had a great deal to say to each other, for Teddy was anxious concerning the progress of Martin's marqueterie, and Christie overwhelmed him with questions concerning his life and studies in that Paris, where Mrs. Henwood and Lettice had discovered him. He objected to this constant stream of questions; she did not give him a moment's rest; in all his life he had never remembered her so talkative. It struck him at last that she was fearful of a pause, and then, out of sheer obstinacy, he tried to obtain one by answering in monosyllables, and finally, even Christie was at a loss what fresh topic to suggest. She had heard all concerning Mrs. Henwood, how she had altered for the better, too, and was Teddy's patroness, and for Teddy's sake, or for the sake of his future, had resolved never to marry

again, though she had only received an offer last week from Mr. Tinchester—an offer made in a Bath chair, owing to the gout still being in the way. Christie had heard all concerning Lettice, and Zach, and their child—everything about Teddy's work in Paris, and yet there they were, not half-way home yet, and nothing further to say to one another.

Something to say at last, however—a something that lasted to the end of their long walk together—to the end of their lives. Very plainly said—and very plainly answered—as beffitted two prosaic folk, with their hearts in their throats.

They had been walking together for two or three minutes in silence, when Teddy startled her by his hoarse voice.

“Christie,” he said, suddenly, “it was not true that there was not anything wanting to complete my happiness, although I told your father so to-day. Of course there was *you*—as there always has been, as there always will be, unless you will have me for a husband?”

Christie looked down, and walked faster, as Teddy went on. But she did not ask him to stop.

“I thought that I should never have the boldness to ask you, for I knew—no one better—how unworthy I was. But I think that the past is far away enough, and I—I—love you very dearly!”

"I think," was the abrupt answer, "that I can believe that."

"Then you will have me?"

"Yes," she answered, "I will have you, Teddy."

Teddy pressed her hand to his side, and poured forth his thanks in her ear. He grew wondrously eloquent on the instant, and he told all the story of his love over again, all his struggles with it, and the resolutions made concerning it, broken, happily for both of them, on that auspicious evening.

They had been, these two, so long in love with one another, that the promise once made between them, rendered them like old lovers, who had been courting all their lives. They could proceed on together full of faith in each other, and confident in their power to make the future all sunshine. Before they reached home they wondered why they had kept silent so long, each knowing so well where true happiness might be found.

"But you were so firm, Teddy, that you frightened me," confessed Christie. "Oh! the dreadful things that you have said!"

"Who told you?"

"My father, to be sure. My father, who has always wished our marriage—I know now. Even, I believe, when I nearly quarrelled with him for the first time in my life, and came with aunt to Upper Ground Street. Fancy me quarrelling with my dear father, and about you, too, Teddy!"

See what a bold young woman you are going to marry!"

They were in high spirits now, these two. There was no effort to disguise their happiness—they could have walked on hours longer in these busy streets—full of their love for one another, forgetting everything but themselves. Forgetting Zach, who was beginning a new life from that day, and with whom Teddy never entered into partnership. For Teddy found a business partner in Martin Wynn, and left Zach to the care of Lettice—looking in very often to make sure that Zach was not growing fond of money any more, and remonstrating, always with effect, with the pale-faced, delicate man, whose business energy had nearly killed him, and whose brother's love came back with his weakness, and never went away again. Forgetting everything but themselves, even when they were in Martin Wynn's shady doorway, and for the first time in his life Teddy clasped the maiden in his arms, and kissed her.

"I hope it isn't a dream, Christie," he said, "that I shall not wake up in Paris! Let me hear you say again that you will have me for your husband."

"Ah! and glad to get you," was the arch reply, "after all these years of waiting!"

She was in his arms again, with her bonnet crushed out of all shape against his chest, when

Polly Wynn opened suddenly the door, and she and Martin Wynn, both waiting for them, stood in the passage looking out.

“Just as I thought!” cried Martin Wynn.
“Just as it should be!”

“God bless us!” ejaculated Polly; “to think that we are all going to be happy at last!”

THE END.

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